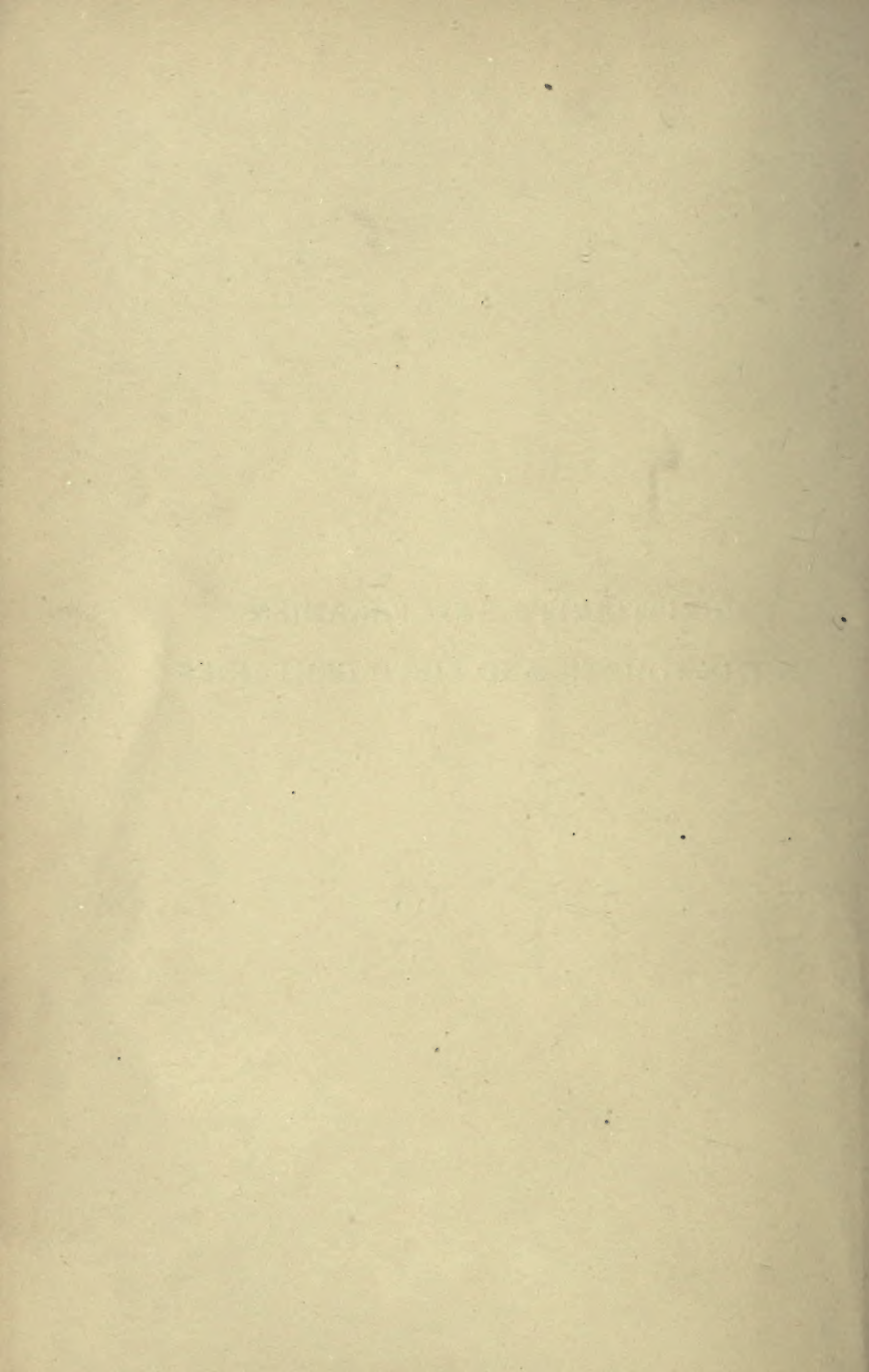




Digitized by the Internet Archive
in 2007 with funding from
Microsoft Corporation

CHRISTIANITY AND PAGANISM
IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES



Eccel.
B.

Christianity and Paganism

IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH CENTURIES

BY

ERNEST N. BENNETT, M.A.

FELLOW AND LECTURER OF HERTFORD COLLEGE, OXFORD

οὐκ ἦλθον βαλεῖν εἰρήνην ἐπὶ τὴν γῆν, ἀλλὰ μάχαιραν.

S. MATT. x. 34.

τὸ παλαιούμενον καὶ γηράσκον ἐγγὺς ἀφανισμοῦ.

HEB. viii. 13.

50570
28/8/01

RIVINGTONS

34 KING STREET, COVENT GARDEN

LONDON

1900

PREFACE

THIS little volume lays claim to no large amount of research or originality of treatment. It comprises the notes which I have used in lecturing to men at Oxford who were reading for the Honour School of Theology. It has no further aim than to furnish a convenient summary which may be of some service to any theological students who are interested in the period covered by its pages. I am very largely indebted throughout the book to the able monograph of M. Étienne Chastel, published at Geneva in 1850. Mr. S. G. Hamilton, of Hertford College, kindly read through the proofs for me.

ERNEST N. BENNETT.

OXFORD, *February* 8, 1900.

LIST OF THE CHIEF MODERN AUTHORITIES CONSULTED AND QUOTED

- Neander's *Church History* (Bohn's translation).
 Robertson's *Church History*.
 Gibbon's *Decline and Fall of the Roman Empire*.
 Milman, *History of Christianity*.
 Beugnot, *Destruction du Paganisme en Occident*.
 Chastel, *Destruction du Paganisme en Orient* (Geneva, 1850).
 Boissier, *La fin du Paganisme*.
 Schultze, *Geschichte des Untergangs des Griechisch-römischen Heidentums* (Jena, 1887).
 Hoffmann, *Ruina Superstitionis Paganæ*.
 Rüdiger, *De statu paganorum sub imp. post Constantinum*.
 Gothofredus, *De statu paganorum*. (A commentary on *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10).
 B. Constant, *Polythéisme Romain*.
 Mosheim, *Church History* (translated by Soames).
 Gieseler, *Ecclesiastical History* (translated by Davidson).

OUTLINE OF CONTENTS

CHAPTER I

CAUSES WHICH RETARDED THE OVERTHROW OF PAGANISM

	PAGE
Conservatism of ancient world—Emperors' unwillingness to alienate subjects—Unsatisfactory condition of Church and clergy—Indifference of magistrates and laity,	1-6

CHAPTER II

METHODS OF DIRECT COERCION EMPLOYED AGAINST PAGANISM

Early relations between rival religions—General toleration of Constantine—His anti-pagan pamphlets—Indirect pressure from conversion of the Court—Destruction of temples—Destruction of statues and images—Attacks upon sacrifices, magic, and divination—Withdrawal of revenues and privileges attached to priesthoods—Attacks upon theatre and circus—Civil and military disabilities inflicted upon pagans—Attacks upon philosophers and rhetoricians.	
The execution of such coercive measures, by magistrates, bishops, monks—Illegality of clerical iconoclasm—Employment of imperial troops—The morality of such measures—Their results striking, yet productive of much evil,	7-46

CHAPTER III

THE INHERENT WEAKNESS OF PAGANISM AND THE FITNESS
OF CHRISTIANITY, IN THE FOURTH AND FIFTH
CENTURIES, TO TAKE ITS PLACE

	PAGE
Weakness of pagan priesthood—Its want of union, of independence, of moral influence — Stationary character of popular paganism —The Neoplatonic revival with its use of allegory—Defects in the system—Its degradation and failure—Former supports of Paganism from (1) aristocratic priesthoods, (2) national tradition had disappeared — Felt want of a cosmopolitan religion — Paganism supplied no comfort to an unhappy world.	
Christianity suited to answer the want—A happy mean between popular and philosophic paganism—Its practical and definite character—Its universality—Adapted itself to requirements of the vulgar—Of the educated classes, .	47-68

CHAPTER IV

THE LAST DAYS OF PAGANISM

Barbarian invasions—The fall of Rome—Vitality of rural paganism—Survivals of paganism—Conclusion, .	69-75
---	-------

CHAPTER I

CAUSES WHICH RETARDED THE OVERTHROW OF PAGANISM

IN tracing the course of a struggle which changed profoundly the religious condition of the world and eliminated some of the most prominent factors in ancient civilisation, one would naturally expect to find the work of reform beset with difficulties. Yet it is surprising that a colourless religion like the paganism of the fourth and fifth centuries should have continued to exist for more than two hundred years in spite of an almost constant persecution at the hands of civil and ecclesiastical authority. It may be well to attempt a brief outline of some of the causes which prolonged the vitality of paganism and retarded the success of its opponents.

It is not easy to exaggerate the enormous force which the sentiment of conservatism exerted in the ancient world. To the mass of mankind the truth or falsity of their religious systems was only a

2 *Christianity and Paganism in the*

subsidiary consideration; the essential requirement was that they should be stamped with the impress of antiquity—‘nec considerant quales sint,’ says Lactantius, ‘sed ex hoc probatas atque veras esse confidunt quod eas veteres tradiderunt.’¹ The educated pagans of the later empire had long ceased to demand any spiritual benefits from the national religion. The rites and ceremonies which they scrupulously observed were quite unconnected with the morality or mysticism derived from the doctrines of a Zeno or Plotinus.² Yet even amongst those whose sober judgment revealed the absurdities of popular paganism, an ill-defined belief continued to prevail that the welfare of the empire was in some way or other bound up with the maintenance of the national cult. How, demands Symmachus, could Rome bring herself to abandon the deities under whose protection her conquests had been made and her power established?³

¹ Lactant. *Div. Instit.* ii. p. 144, ed. Spark. Cp. the context: ‘Hae sunt religiones quas sibi a majoribus suis traditas pertinacissime tueri et defendere perseverant . . . tantaque est auctoritas vetustatis ut inquirere in eam scelus esse dicatur.’

² Cp. Cic. *De Nat. Deorum*, iii. 2: ‘Cum de religione agitur T. Coruncanium, P. Scaevolam, P. Scipionem, pontifices maximos, non Zenonem, aut Cleanthem aut Chrysippum sequor.’

³ ‘Hic cultus in leges meas orbem redegit; haec sacra Hannibalem a moenibus, a Capitolio Senonas repulerunt,’ etc. (Symm. *Rel. ad Imp.* apud Ambros. v. 96).

Again, the emperors would naturally be indisposed, especially in an age of civil dissensions and perils from barbarian invasion, to alienate the sympathy of perhaps the larger section of their subjects by violent measures against the current religion. In the time of Constantine, the numerical superiority of the pagans was very marked. Even in the fifth century it is doubtful, in spite of the optimistic language of the imperial edicts,¹ whether more than half of the inhabitants of Constantinople were Christians.²

Other difficulties arose from the policy and character of those charged with the conduct of the campaign against paganism. The narrow dogmatic Christianity of the period, flushed with its new position as a State religion, was ill adapted to win the sympathy of intelligent heathens. Their purely human feelings must have often revolted from a creed which maintained that their deceased friends and relatives were doomed to everlasting torment by the fiat of that Deity to whose worship they were invited.³ The precepts of Jesus Christ were

¹ *e.g.* 'pagani qui supersunt, quamquam jam nullos esse credamus' (*Cod. Th.* xvi. 10).

² Beugnot, ii. 195, says a quarter. This seems incredible. At Antioch in the time of Valens we hear of τὸ βραχύτατον τῶν Ἑλλήνων λείψανον (*Theod.* v. 35).

³ Cp. the case of the German Radbod (*Neander Ch. Hist.* v. 60).

4 *Christianity and Paganism in the*

frequently distorted into fanatical doctrines, incompatible with the principles of sound government,¹ and the whole system appeared to pagan critics confused and inconsistent.² 'How these Christians love one another' had once had a meaning; but in an age when the internal battles of the Church were, as St. Augustine says, more bitterly waged than those of the Hunnish invaders,³ it was a contradiction in terms. The arrogance exhibited by bishops in the dictation, and by monks in the execution, of anti-pagan decrees, was paralleled in private by an intolerable interference in the arrangements of family life. In accordance with the letter of the apostolic injunction, Christians were warned not to marry their daughters to Gentiles:⁴ and the primitive morality of the early Israelites was adduced to justify a merciless persecution of idolatry, unrestrained by the ties of natural affection.⁵ In short, pagans had some grounds for their assertion that the conduct of their oppressors violated the spirit

¹ *e.g.* 'qui militat gladio mortis minister est' (Paulinus ap. Beugn. ii. 86).

² 'Confusa apud nos omnia philosophi gentilium judicant' (Gauden-tius Brixianus, p. 840; Migne, see *note*).

³ Cf. Neander, iii. p. 50.

⁴ Ambrose, i. p. 239 *sq.*; Robertson, ii. p. 21 *sq.*

⁵ Cf. Minucius Felix, ed. Gronov., p. 463. He quotes Deut. xiii. 6-10, and proceeds: 'nec filio jubet parci nec fratri et per amatam conjugem gladium vindicem ducit' (Riidiger, p. 28).

of the Gospel.¹ But on the whole they judged Christianity by a superficial standard: an ideal is not invalidated because individuals degrade it, nor must the worth of a religion be decided altogether from its visible effects upon the course of history.

Lastly, the abolition of paganism was retarded by the indifference of the magistrates intrusted with the execution of coercive measures, and of the Christian laity who refused to co-operate with their spiritual leaders. The re-enactment of the same edicts within short periods and the frequent penalties denounced against official remissness in enforcing the law, sufficiently attest the pagan sympathies or the religious apathy of the provincial governors.² But the prevalence of ascetic ideals of life, so fearfully dangerous to the morality of the many, combined with the sterile orthodoxy of the age to produce a still more fatal lethargy in the ranks of the Christian laity in general. Antioch had always been a stronghold of Christianity; but even here a large majority of professed Christians were quite indifferent to the claims of their religion, which they left to the attention of their wives and daughters.³

¹ The brutal George of Alexandria was 'professionis suae oblitus, quae nihil nisi justum suadet et lenē' (Amm. Marcell. xxii. 11).

² Cf. Schaff's *History* (Post-Nicene Period), vol. i. p. 67.

Misopogon (Iul. Imp.), p. 363, ed. Spanheim. Cp. Robertson, ii. p. 45.

‘When one talks to you,’ says Libanius, ‘about Plato or Pythagoras, you put forward in reply your mother, wife, housekeeper or cook, submitting to follow those whom you ought to lead.’¹ In the country districts, landed proprietors showed a culpable negligence in allowing the exercise of pagan worship upon their estates, partly because they derived considerable profit from the offerings upon the altars of the rural deities,² but also in consequence of a simple unwillingness to trouble themselves. The homilies of the clergy against the permission of these idolatrous abuses were met with such replies as ‘nescio, non jussi,’ ‘causa mea non est,’ ‘non me tangit.’³

¹ ὅταν Πλάτωνος καὶ Πυθαγόρου μνησθῇ τις, τὴν μήτερα καὶ τὴν γυναῖκα καὶ τὴν ταμίαν καὶ τὴν μάγειρον προτείνεσθε κ.τ.λ. (Liban. i. 502, ed. Reiske).

² Cf. Zeno of Verona apud Neand. iii. 113.

³ Cp. Maximus of Turin (ed. Rom. 1784), Sermons xcvi. and xcvii. (De idolis auferendis de propriis possessionibus), p. 655 : ‘nec se aliquis excusandum putet dicens, “non jussi fieri,” “non mandavi.”’

CHAPTER II

COERCIVE MEASURES AGAINST PAGANISM

THE principles of toleration inaugurated by a decree of the dying Galerius,¹ and the subsequent edicts published under the combined authority of Licinius and Constantine,² continued to influence the latter emperor after he had secured the sovereignty of the whole empire. Persecution was indeed foreign to the thoughts of a prince whose object was to replace the confusion of the civil wars by a period of peace,³ and in whose eyes *φιλανθρωπία* ranked amongst the greatest virtues of a good ruler.⁴ The aggressive zeal of the rising Church was restrained by an edict which inculcated a universal toleration, and it was expressly ordered that heathen temples should be free from outrage.⁵

Yet Constantine did not at the commencement of

¹ Cp. for a similar edict, issued by the persecutor Maximin, Euseb. *Eccl. Hist.* ix. 10, Migne, p. 832.

² Lactant. *De Mort. Persec.* 48.

³ *εἰρηνεύειν . . . τὸν λαὸν καὶ ἀστυλαστον μένειν ἐπιθυμῶ* (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* ii. 56).

⁴ Hoffmann, p. 5.

⁵ *μηδεὶς τὸν ἕτερον παρενοχλεῖτω* (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* ii. 56); *ἕκαστος . . . τὸν ἕτερον μὴ καταβλαπτέτω* (*Ibid.* c. 60).

8 *Christianity and Paganism in the*

the struggle confine himself altogether to a merely negative attitude. He judged correctly that the most effective method of overthrowing paganism was the refutation of its tenets; and amongst his manifold occupations he found time to compile and disseminate a series of pamphlets,¹ in which, amongst other things, he justified his demolition of certain temples by depicting the follies of the ancient creed and the impotence of its deities to render assistance to their votaries.² The argumentative part of these writings cannot be regarded as happy. All other proofs of the superiority of Christianity are subordinated to the present prosperity of the empire and the military successes of its ruler.³

Much pressure was doubtless brought to bear upon the less vigorous adherents of paganism by the mere fact that the emperor had declared himself a Christian. Political and social interests are

¹ διδασκαλίαν κατὰ τῆς εἰδωλολατρίας πλάνης . . . τοῖς κατὰ πᾶν ἔθνος ἐπαρχεώταις κατέπεμπε (*Ibid.* c. 47).

² Cp. Athanasius, *De Incarn.* c. 49, p. 79, ed. Robertson.

³ This kind of argument is a commonplace in Christian and pagan literature alike. Cp. Iulian ap. Cyril., ed. Spanh., p. 209: βασιλεύειν ἔδοσαν οἱ θεοὶ τῇ Ῥώμῃ, τοῖς Ἰουδαίοις ὀλίγον μὲν χρόνον ἐλευθέρους εἶναι, δουλεῦσαι δὲ ἀεὶ κ.τ.λ.; and p. 218: ἕνα μοι κατ' Ἀλέξανδρον δείξατε στρατῆγον, ἕνα κατὰ Καίσαρα παρὰ τοῖς Ἑβραίοις. Yet the pagan Praxagoras confessed that Constantine's successes surpassed all others: φησὶν οὖν ὁ Πραξαγόρας καίτοι τὴν θρησκείαν Ἑλλήνων ὦν . . . παντὶ εὐτυχίῳ πάντας τοὺς πρὸ αὐτοῦ . . . Κωνσταντῖνος ἀπεκρύψατο (*Phot. Bibl.* p. 66, ed. Schott).

frequently powerful factors in the choice of a creed ; and when the profession of Christianity meant little else than submission to the rite of baptism, a multitude¹ of indifferent pagans transferred their insincere adherence from one form of belief to another in order to secure the imperial favour and enjoy greater opportunities of promotion. A further premium was set upon such hypocritical conversion by Constantine's habit of distributing money amongst his Christian subjects,² and his bestowal of various privileges upon towns which had abandoned the old for the new religion.³

Such were the relations between the rival religions at the commencement of the struggle. But as time went on, owing to the continued obstinacy of the pagans and the influence of Christian bishops, this early toleration was gradually replaced by a sterner policy of repression.

It has been said that 'while the devotion of the poet and philosopher may be secretly nourished by prayer, meditation, and study, the exercise of public worship appears to be the only solid foundation for the religious sentiments of the people, which derive their force from imitation and habit.'⁴ This was especially true in the case of ancient paganism.

The destruction of
Temples.

¹ Cp. Athan. *De Incarn.* c. xxx. 4.

² Euseb. *Vit. Const.* iii. 58.

³ Chastel, p. 68.

⁴ Gibbon, c. xxviii.

A religion which depended so entirely upon a pompous temple ritual and the due performance of certain ceremonies¹ could not long survive the withdrawal of these essentials. By the demolition of temples, a blow was struck at the popular belief in the indestructibility of pagan monuments;² and heathenism was deprived of one of the few sources which yet furnished vitality to its decaying institutions.

By Constantine's orders a large number of pagan temples were closed, the pavements of which were cleansed and the statuary repolished in the reign of Julian;³ but it is doubtful whether he published any edict for their destruction. There was a tendency amongst ecclesiastical writers to idealise the first Christian emperor, and to refer to him the invention of all forms of coercion against paganism. Thus we find accounts of a wholesale demolition⁴ of temples during this reign, many of which are said to have been handed over to Christian use.⁵ On the other hand Theodoret expressly mentions that Constantine

¹ 'Omnis populi Romani religio in sacra et in auspicia divisa est' (*De Nat. Deor.* iii. 2).

² Cp. the popular beliefs about the image of Serapis at Alexandria (Gibbon, c. xxviii.); and the effect produced by Boniface's destruction of the Thunder-Oak in Germany (Mosheim, ii. III note).

³ Hoffmann, p. 9.

⁴ By Jerome, Cedrenus, Cyrus Monachus, etc., ap. Gothof., p. 4.

⁵ Cedrenus, ed. Paris, p. 272.

closed the temples *but did not destroy them*.¹ Still stronger evidence is afforded by the silence of Libanius, who, while he charges Constantine with robbing the temples, says not a word about their demolition.² Moreover any indiscriminate overthrow of pagan edifices would have been at variance with the artistic tastes of the emperor, who did not scruple to adorn his Christian capital with a temple of the Dioscuri.³ Hence it is probable that the only pagan structures razed during this reign were those which—like the temples of Aphrodite at Aphaca⁴ and Heliopolis⁵—were disgraced by impure rites. Whether the shrine of Æsculapius⁶ was included in the list is uncertain: one would not naturally have expected its destruction at the hands of an emperor who publicly sanctioned the employment of divination for recovery from sickness.⁷

¹ τοὺς . . . ναοὺς οὐ κατέλυσεν ἀλλ' ἀβάτους εἶναι προσέταξε (Theod. v. 20).

² Cp. Liban. *Pro. Temp.* ii. p. 162. See *Orat.* xxvi.

³ Zosimus, ii. p. 107, ed. Bekker.

⁴ Euseb. *Vit. Const.* iii. 55. Cp. his destruction of the impure priests of the Nile (*Ibid.* iv. 25), who were, however, subsequently replaced (Rüdiger, p. 26).

⁵ Eus. *Vit. Const.* iii. 58. Yet this cult of Aphrodite still existed in Valens's time: εἰδωλικοί γὰρ οἱ πάντες (Theod. v. 22). The statement of Eunapius (*Vit. Aed.* p. 20, ed. Boissonade)—Κωνσταντῖνος ἐβασίλευσε τὰ τε τῶν ἱερῶν ἐπιφανέστατα καταστρέφων κ.τ.λ.—need not refer to anything beyond the overthrow of these polluted temples.

⁶ Euseb. *Vit. Const.* 56. Libanius attributes its destruction to Constantius; ii. 187.

⁷ Gothof. *De Stat. Pag.* p. 1, note.

The legislation of Constantine's successors exhibits an apparent toleration towards pagan temples. Constans forbade the destruction of those outside the walls of Rome lest the festivals connected with them should disappear;¹ and no severer edict issued from Constantius than an order to close all temples alike in town and country.² But it is clear that the two emperors went far beyond the letter of their laws, and the spark of pagan hatred kindled by Constantine burst into a flame under the aggressive policy of his sons.³ The sites and building materials of demolished temples were handed over for the construction of Christian churches. Even when such structures remained intact, they were presented to the emperor's friends with as little compunction as was felt in the bestowal of a dog, a horse, or a slave.⁴ The feelings of the heathen were outraged by seeing the columns, stones, and woodwork of their temples used for the construction of private houses,⁵ and still more by the permission accorded to prostitutes and other

¹ *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 3; Gothof. p. 4.

² Sozomen, iii. 17.

³ παρὰ τοῦ πατρὸς σπίνθηρα κακῶν δεξάμενος ἐς φλόγα πολλὴν τὸ πρᾶγμα προήγαγε (*Lib. Orat.* xxvi. ; Reiske, ii.).

⁴ δῶρα ναοὺς τοῖς ἀμφ' αὐτὸν ἐδίδου καθάπερ ἵππον ἢ ἀνδράποδον ἢ κύνα ἢ φιάλην χρυσῆν (*Lib. Pro Temp.* ii. 185).

⁵ Cf. *Lib.* "Ὅτι τὸ πλουτ. ἀδίκ. κ.τ.λ. i. pp. 248-49.

vile persons to occupy the structures dedicated to their gods.¹

The crusade against the temples, checked for a brief period by the reign of Julian, was renewed under his successor. The building of new edifices ceased abruptly, and those which had been re-opened and re-endowed were closed.² No destruction of temples was legalised during the joint reign of Valens and Valentinian. The former is especially eulogised by Libanius for his moderation toward the seats of pagan worship,³ and united with his brother in freely acknowledging the liberty of religious belief.⁴ Yet the significant fact that military protection was required for certain temples at this time leads us to suspect that the anti-pagan reaction which followed on the restraints of Julian's reign was sometimes too violent to be controlled by mere legislation.⁵

Gratian apparently abstained from all interference with the temples; but the piety of his successor, Theodosius the Great, was eagerly employed by

¹ πρόποις ἐνοικεῖν ἔδωκε [Lib. *Monod. in Iul.* i. p. 509]: it may be that Libanius is here referring to immoral monks and nuns. *Vid.* Reiske not. *ad. loc.* and cp. τὸν τῶν ἱερῶν πλοῦτον εἰς τοὺς ἀσελγεστάτους μεμερισμένον (*Epitaph. in Iul.* ii. 529).

² Soc. iii. 24.

³ Liban. ii. p. 189.

⁴ 'Postremo hoc moderamine principatus inclaruit quod inter religionum diversitates medius stetit' (Amm. Mar. xxx. 9).

⁵ Hoffmann, p. 14.

bishops for the furtherance of their designs. In the oration ‘Ὑπὲρ τῶν ἱερῶν’ Libanius employs all the resources of rhetoric as he pleads for the ancient monuments of the national worship. Over and above the current arguments drawn from religious sources, the emperor is reminded of the serious diminution in the revenue which would accompany a general destruction of temples.¹ But the exhortations of Ambrose and kindred spirits had more weight with Theodosius than the eloquence of the pagan orator. And although not a single edict of this reign enjoined the demolition of pagan structures, and in one instance at least the imperial assent was given to a continuation of pagan worship,² it is nevertheless certain that countless buildings dedicated to the ancient religion were destroyed in defiance of, or with the tacit consent of, the civil

¹ Cp. the answer of Arcadius to the zealous Porphyry of Gaza:—*οἶδα ὅτι ἡ πόλις ἐκείνη κατείδωλος ἐστίν, ἀλλὰ εὐγνώμων ἐστὶ περὶ τὴν εἰσφόραν τῶν δημοσίων, πολλὰ συντελοῦσα. ἐὰν οὖν ἀφνω διασεβῶμεν αὐτοὺς τῷ φόβῳ φύγη χρήσονται καὶ ἀπολούμεν τοσοῦτον κἀνονα.* Gaza was a very hotbed of heathenism,—*οἱ δαίμονες ἐπλήρωσαν τῆς πλάνης πᾶσαν τὴν πόλιν αὐτῶν καὶ περιοικίδα.* Its three hundred Christians sent a petition against this idolatry to Arcadius by their bishop Porphyry. Won over by the entreaties of Eudoxia and Chrysostom, the emperor at length yielded. Troops were despatched to Gaza by forced marches and speedily demolished its temples. [Marc. Diac. *Vit. Porphy. Gaza*, ed. Haupt. (*Abhand. der König. Akad. der Wissen. zu Berlin*, 1874.) Previously this was only known in a Latin translation.]

² *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 8.

authorities. Temples were razed to the ground in Arabia, Phœnicia, Syria, and Egypt, and this devastating activity culminated in the overthrow of perhaps the greatest stronghold of Eastern heathenism, the Serapeum of Alexandria.¹ The legislation of Theodosius's successors displays an increased severity against pagan buildings. Arcadius ordered that all country temples should be destroyed 'as quietly as possible,'² and his brother in spite of some æsthetic scruples issued a similar edict against pagan chapels upon private estates.³ These partial measures received their full complement in the indiscriminate demolition commanded by the younger Theodosius.

It is at first sight difficult to understand the extraordinary virulence displayed by Christians against the statues of the pagan gods. But we must remember that the iconoclastic monks and laymen lived under conditions foreign to those of our own day. The evils connected with the existence of such works of art were presented to them with a force which we

Destruction
of Statues
and
Images.

¹ Cf. Robertson, i. 395 sq. The Alexandrians, like the Athenians of old, were 'δεισιδαιμονέστεροι.' Cp. *Vet. Orb. Descript.* p. 19 (ap. Rüdiger. 34), 'dii coluntur eminenter et Templum Serapis ibi est.'

² 'Si qua in agris templa sunt sine turba ac tumultu diruantur.' (*Cod. Theod.* xvii. 10; Gothof. p. 22).

³ 'Domini . . . destruere cogantur' (*Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 19; Gothof. p. 27). Cf. too Gothof. p. 25.

can no longer appreciate. In an age when the malevolent agency of demons and evil spirits was regarded as an unquestioned fact by even the most enlightened thinkers, it was natural that the idols of the heathen should still be thought, as in the days of St. Paul,¹ to be the habitations of devils. And the eviction of these impure denizens by the destruction of their dwelling-places was considered in some way or other to blunt the edge of their activity.² But this righteous zeal was not the only motive in the seizure of pagan images. The streets and squares of the new capital were for the most part destitute of works of art, and hundreds of statues were transported from their former homes to gratify the artistic proclivities of the Eastern emperors.

Constantine commenced the campaign by prohibiting the erection of fresh statues of the gods, or himself, in any temple.³ But more energetic measures soon followed. The objects of their veneration, the

¹ ὁ θύει τὰ ἔθνη δαίμονιους θύει καὶ οὐ θεῶ (1 Cor. x. 20). Cp. execranda daemonum sacrificia (*Cod. Th.* xvi. 10, 23).

² Cf. Victor Schultze, p. 326.

³ Euseb. *Vit. Const.* ii. 45. Socrates' statement, εἰκόνας δὲ τὰς λέλας ἐν τοῖς ναοῖς ἐνανέθετο, which seems somewhat ambiguous, is supposed by Hoffmann (p. 18) to refer to Christian images: this surely involves an anachronism. There is a strange story by Philostorgius that Constantine's image was publicly worshipped at Constantinople, which is corroborated by Theod. i. *fin.* *Vid.* Vales. not. in *Socrat.* p. 12.

visible emblems of the presence of their deities, were treated with contumely in the sight of the pagans. Idols were dragged from their hiding-places, broken, burned, or, when possible, coined into money.¹ Sometimes they were secured by ropes, or dragged along as captives of the dominant religion, or portions of sculptured groups were detached, and the remaining figures left in ridiculous attitudes.²

Nevertheless, in spite of the general absence of artistic taste,³ under which such indiscriminate vandalism was sanctioned, æsthetic considerations, as we have seen, occasionally led Constantine to spare the more famous statues for the adornment of his capital.⁴ Not even the sanctity of sepulchres was proof against the zeal or cupidity of those who provided such treasures, and the city was adorned by many images and columns rifled from pagan burial-places.⁵

The energetic demolition of idols which continued under Constans and Constantius was checked by the reaction of Julian's reign. Images recovered from the Christians were restored to their former positions amid much festivity and rejoicing,⁶ and the supposed

¹ Sozom. ii. 5.

² Zosimus, ii. 31.

³ Gibbon, c. xiv.

⁴ Cp. Gibbon, c. xxvii.

⁵ Cf. a law against such conduct, *Cod. Theod.* ix. 17, 1: 'si quis in demoliendis sepulchris fuerit apprehensus . . . metallo adjudicetur.'

⁶ Neander, iii. 66.

statue of Christ publicly dragged through the streets of Paneas by the exasperated pagans.¹

The tolerance and love for architecture which characterised the joint reign of Valentinian and his colleague lent little encouragement to the destruction of statues, which were freely employed at this period for the decoration of public streets and edifices.² A similar reluctance to favour a reckless iconoclasm is shown in a law of the first Theodosius, where statues of the gods, 'artis pretio quam divinitate metienda,' are ordered to be protected from outrage.³ Yet during this reign the fall of the Serapeum involved the ruin of many idols, one of which was preserved in order to inspire by its hideousness a retrospective disgust in the minds of future converts from paganism.⁴ Later edicts of Honorius, which contradict the spirit of his earlier legislation, decree the removal from public places of all pagan images and altars alike.⁵

¹ Philostrat. ap. Hoffmann, p. 21.

² Cp. Ambrose *cont. Symm.* v. 99: 'non illi satis sunt lavacra, non porticus, non plateae occupatae simulacris?' For the seven deputations to four emperors on the subject of the Statue of Victory in the Senate-house, see Beugnot, i. 410 *sqq.*

³ Gothof. p. 10.

⁴ Socrat. v. 16, p. 275.

⁵ Simulacra ab usibus lavacrorum vel publicis aspectibus separentur' (Gothof. p. 30),—'et arae locis omnibus destruantur' (Gothof. p. 27). Contrast with this: 'volumus publicorum operum ornamenta servari' (Gothof. p. 22).

A dislike for the secret rites of paganism was not confined to Christians. As early as the time of Tiberius such practices were forbidden,¹ but incessant restraints and penalties appear to have had little effect, and in the fourth century scarcely a single town or village was without its diviners, classed into four grades under the generic title of 'malefici.'² In this respect the realm of pagan superstition was divided against itself; and a decided blow was struck at the ancient religion when it was discovered that the line of demarcation between the legal and the more dubious forms of divination was scarcely perceptible. Most of the imperial enactments against sacrifices and divinations identify them with magic, the practice of which threatened the security of the government and thus rendered its votaries liable to the 'crimen majestatis.'

It is improbable that Constantine did more than prohibit such rites as were vehicles for seditious plots or pagan licentiousness.³ Under his successor,

¹ Suetonius, *Vit. Tib.* 63. Many pagans condemned the 'nocturna sacrificia' (Gothof. *Cod. Theod. de malef.* p. 127, note). Valentinian, however, tolerated the Greek mysteries celebrated at night, for the Proconsul of Achaia ἔφη τὸν νόμον ἀβίωτον τοῖς Ἑλλήσι καταστήσειν τὸν βίον εἰ μέλλοιεν κωλύεσθαι τὰ ἀγιώτατα μυστήρια κατὰ θεσμὸν ἐκτελεῖν (Zosim. iv. 3, p. 176).

² Beugnot, i. 243.

³ Constantine's *universal* prohibition of sacrifice is an ecclesiastical fiction. He *may* have forbidden provincial governors to sacrifice

however, an indiscriminate attack was made upon sacrifices; death and confiscation were denounced against offenders and all magistrates who neglected to enforce the law.¹ The influence of Julian, whose passion for sacrifice—according to Ammianus's sarcasm—threatened to exhaust the empire of its cattle,² was partially reversed by the policy of Valens.³ It has been said, indeed, that pagans enjoyed, on the whole, better treatment at the hands of this prince than orthodox Christians; and it seems likely that the Arians, in order to neutralise the numerical superiority of their opponents, frequently availed themselves of the anti-Christian feelings of their pagan neighbours. But in one direction the pagans suffered terribly during this reign. The superstitious emperor appears to have felt a morbid dread of anything in the shape of magic or divination. Large numbers of pagans were tortured and slain under the accusation of such forbidden prac-

(Euseb. *Vit. Const.* ii. 44), as the force of their example would be great; if so, the law was a dead letter. Cp. Sozom. i. 8 and Cyrus Monach. ap. Goth. p. 3 with Lib. *Pro. Temp.* ii. 162: τῆς κατὰ νόμους θεράπευας ἐκίνησεν οὐδὲ ἐν. Augury for the welfare of the State was permitted by Constantine and Valentinian (*Cod. Theod. de malef.* ix. 16, 9).

¹ *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 2 and xvi. 10, 4.

² Ammian. Marcell. xxv. 4, 17.

³ I say 'partially,' because during this reign the orgies of Bacchus and Ceres were openly celebrated in broad daylight (Hoff. p. 24).

tices;¹ for it was as easy to make such charges as it was difficult to refute them, and the 'curiosi' who represented the earlier 'delatores' were always on the watch to lay information of 'laesa majestas.'² By the emperor's order, all books connected with magic were burned. Whole libraries, — 'innumeri codices et acervi voluminum multi' — were consumed with a shameful disregard for the value of their contents, and a panic ensued, in which private owners vied with each other in the eager surrender of their volumes.³

The elder Theodosius was led by his violent enmity towards the whole pagan system to issue several inclusive decrees against all sacrificial and augural rites—public and private alike;⁴ and this rigorous policy was fully maintained by Arcadius, Honorius, and Theodosius II. It is true that the humanity of the latter monarch, or his contempt for the paucity of the pagans, induced him to commute the capital sentence for one of confiscation and exile.⁵

¹ Cf. Amm. Marcell. xxix. 1, 40: 'omnium fere ordinum multitudo . . . percussorum dexteris fatigavit tormentis et plumbo et verberibus ante debilitata.' Eunap. *Vit. Max.* p. 63: πολλοὺς προκατακόψας αἰρίους τε καὶ ἀναίριους. In Amm. Marcell. there is an extraordinary story of a 'spiritualistic' *séance* round a table, and the punishment by Valens of those who took part in it.

² Rüdiger, p. 37.

³ Amm. Marcell. xxix. 2, 4.

⁴ *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 12; Gibbon, c. xxviii.

⁵ 'Pagani qui supersunt quamvis capitali poenae subdi debuerint bonorum proscriptione et exilio coerceri' (*Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 23).

But the frequent commission of such crimes and the occurrence of plagues and storms, which were regarded as a divine chastisement for such weak-minded indulgence, brought about a restoration of the death-penalty.¹

The abolition of
Pagan Endowments
and
Privileges.

Nothing can demonstrate more conclusively the moribund condition of paganism at this period than the crushing effect produced upon it by the withdrawal of its privileges and resources. Any religion which was firmly fixed in the hearts of its adherents would not have been extinguished by a mere curtailment of its wealth: the material losses of its priesthood would have secured for them an increase of moral influence, and pecuniary deficits have been made good from the pockets of the laity. But as it was, the temples, fallen in from decay, destroyed by barbarians and incendiary monks, or overthrown by earthquakes, continued in ruin, without any hope of restoration from public or private expenditure. And while the seizure of pagan endowments involved the neglect of the temples, it also practically abolished the priesthood, whose members declared that the performance of their functions was impossible under such conditions.²

¹ *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 25.

² 'Illi caerimonias suas sine questu manere posse non credunt' (Ambros. v. p. 98 D).

The confiscation of pagan emoluments was initiated by Constantine, who spent them on the adornment of his capital,¹ or in largesses to the Church.² Yet the traditional connection between the aristocracy and higher offices of the priesthood was recognised by Constantius, who, during his visit to the capital, was powerfully affected by the splendour of its pagan ritual, and distributed a number of sacerdotal titles amongst the Roman nobility.³ Constans, too, sanctioned the rights hitherto possessed by pagan priests with reference to sepulchres.⁴ But in all probability such indulgence was not extended beyond the walls of Rome; for when Julian came to the throne, he found the pagan hierarchy in a miserable condition. Many priests were in exile, and the few who had escaped this treatment had sunk into insignificance,⁵ and even ceased in the decrepitude of old age to remember the ritual of their office.⁶ At the restoration of Apollo's worship at Daphne, instead of an enthusiastic crowd of devotees, one old priest arrived with

¹ Lib. *Pro Temp.* ii. 161, 162.

² προσέταξε . . . ἐκκλησίας οἰκοδομεῖσθαι καὶ τὰς τούτων προσόδους αὐταῖς δωρεῖσθαι (Cedrenus, p. 284).

³ Symmach. ap. Ambros. v. 96. Hoffmann wrongly refers the passage to Constantine.

⁴ *Cod. Theod.* ix. 17, 2.

⁵ *Vid.* p. 49.

⁶ ὀλίγοι τινες . . . λελειμμένοι γέροντες (Liban. *De Vit. sua*).

a single goose for a victim.¹ Under the imperial favour the pagan hierarchy revived, though Julian's patronage could not always protect his friends from insult and outrage.² His death spread dismay far and wide: priests fled from the reopened temples into concealment, but were speedily dragged from their hiding-places and hurried before Christian tribunals for punishment.³

Under the pressure of famines, pestilences, and the incessant menace of barbarian invasion, the later emperors readily availed themselves of any means for lessening the burden of taxation. In compliance with the importunities of the pagan party in Rome—whose pleading on this occasion triumphed over the protests of Ambrose—Eugenius restored the revenues which formerly belonged to temples and priests.⁴ But this usurper was speedily deposed by Theodosius, who followed the example of Valentinian, Valens, Gratian, and Honorius, by confiscating pagan endowments for the support of the frontier armies.⁵ All the revenues connected with the 'collegia' of Rome were swept away, and the unhappy

¹ *Misopogon*, 363, ed. Spanheim.

² Julian, *Epist.* 62.

³ Neander, iii. 95.

⁴ Rüdiger, p. 58. Cf. Ambrose's letter to Eugenius in Symm. *Epist.*

⁵ *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 19; Gothof. p. 27. Cf. Zosim. iv. 59: *βαρύνεσθαι τὸ δημόσιον ἔλεγε* (sc. Theodosius) *τῇ περὶ τὰ ἱερὰ καὶ τὰς θυσίας δαπάνῃ . . . τῆς στρατιωτικῆς χρείας πλείονων δεομένης χρημάτων.*

Vestals assailed by the pangs of hunger.¹ Yet even this did not satisfy the authorities; the destitute ministers of the fallen religion were deprived of liberty of speech, and sternly bidden to 'hold their peace or die.'² Nevertheless, in spite of such drastic treatment, a few individuals still continued to preserve the name, if not the functions, of the ancient priesthood, and it was not until 396 that their surviving privileges were finally abolished by Arcadius.³

The hostility which had existed in the third century between the Church and all forms of public entertainment still prevailed. All theatrical displays were regarded as specious forms of idolatry, invented by the craft of the devil,⁴ and indeed the intimate connection between popular amusements and paganism lent considerable colour to such an indictment. Besides springing from heathen sources, and owing their regularity to the existence of heathen festivals, the games, contests, mimes, and dramas were stamped with certain features which rendered them unfit for the eyes and ears of a

Attacks
upon the
Theatre
and the
Circus.

¹ Symm. *Rel.* ap. Ambr. *Opp.* v. 97 C: 'sacra castitatis alimenta verterunt,' etc.

² Lib. *Pro. Temp.* ii. 166: τοὺς λεπεῖς δὲ ἡ συγκλὴν ἡ τεθνάναι δεῖ.

³ Privilegia . . . penitus aboleantur (*Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 14; Gothof. p. 20).

⁴ Cf. *De Spectaculis* [Auct. ignot.] p. 2, ap. Cypr. *Opp.*, ed. Oxon., 1682: 'Ita Diabolus artifex . . . idololatriam . . . spectaculis miscuit . . .' etc.

Christian. Without attaching much weight to the charges of inherent falsity¹ and irreligious excitement² brought against theatrical representations and the like, we may fully agree with the Fathers that the sanguinary combats of gladiators and the almost incredible licentiousness of the stage were alike opposed to a religion whose key-words were 'love' and 'purity.'³

Despite the efforts of the more enlightened emperors,⁴ and the denunciations of philosophers,⁵ the popular taste had changed little from that which two centuries before had summed up all its desires in 'panem et circenses,' and it is clear that the great mass of the Christian laity by no means shared in

¹ e.g. Tertull. *De Spectac.* xxiii.

² Cp. *Ibid.* xxv. p. 83: 'Tragoedo vociferante exclamationes ille alicujus prophetae retractabit? et inter effeminati histrionis modos psalmum secum comminiscetur? poterit et de misericordia moveri defixus in morsus ursorum et spongias retiariorum?' Cf., too, xv.

³ Cp. Greg. Naz. *Carm. Iamb.* iii. :—

μη δὴ μαινῆς ὄμμα σὸν θαμάτων
 ὤμων μολυσμοῖς μηδὲ γυμνοῦς εἰσορᾶς
 ἄνδρας θανόντας, θηρία πεπληγμένα
 τάφους τρέχοντας συγγενεῖς τε κειμένους.

Cp. for the *cruelty* of these exhibitions, Beugnot, ii. 24; Martial *Epig.* viii. 30. For their *impurity*, Magnin, *Les origines du théâtre moderne*, p. 515 (only 1 vol. published), and Salv. *De Gub. Dei*, vi. 136, ed. Baluz.

⁴ e.g. Marcus Aurelius and Iulian. Cp. *Misopogon*, 360: ἦν ἐμοὶ καταγελαστότατον τὸ θέατρον.

⁵ e.g. Seneca, *Ep̃p.* vii. and xcvi.

the anti-theatrical feelings of their spiritual leaders. Elijah's chariot-ride and David's dance before the ark were openly alleged as sufficient precedent for the driving contests of the arena and the ballet of the stage:¹ during the service Christians rushed away to witness the games—'spernitur Dei templum,' says Salvian, 'ut curratur ad theatrum'²—and the Eucharist was deserted in order to secure good seats in the Hippodrome.³

The cessation of the 'pompa,' with its procession of pagan idols, was due to Constantine, nor have we any further mention of the 'naumachiae' after his date.⁴ No success, however, attended the efforts of this monarch to suppress the gladiatorial combats, which continued to disgrace the Christianity of the Eastern empire, until a terse edict of Justinian finally abolished them.⁵ In the West, Prudentius's appeal to the emperor was in vain:—

Ille (*sc.* Theodosius) urbem vetuit taurorum sanguine tingi,
Tu mortes miserorum hominum prohibeto libari:

Jam solis contenta feris infamis arena
Nulla cruentatis homicidia ludat in armis.⁶

¹ *De Spectac.* (ap. Cyp. *Opp.*) p. 2. ² Salv. *De Gub. Dei*, vi.

³ Stephens's *Life of Chrysostom*, p. 224. Cp. *Hom. in illud videtur Dom.* i. p. 102 (Migne).

⁴ Onuph. Panvin. Bk. ii. c. 18.

⁵ Chastel, p. 285.

⁶ Prudentius *cont. Synm.* ii. 1124, 1129.

The popular remorse which followed the death of Telemachus soon spent itself, and Honorius's edict against such sanguinary spectacles proved a dead letter. Gladiators still fought in Gaul, when Salvian wrote,¹ and the abuse apparently continued until, with other relics of an effete civilisation, it was swept away by the flood of barbarian invasion.

The shows which graced a citizen's entrance upon magisterial and priestly office were, together with theatrical performances, expressly permitted by Valens and Valentinian, on condition that they were unconnected with pagan sacrifices, immorality, or any disregard of holy days;² and even the celebration of 'solennitates' in pagan temples was not forbidden until the year 408.³ The 'venationes' of the amphitheatre and the horse-races of the circus still retained their popularity; the former of these exhibitions, though interdicted by Anastasius I. in 492, yet lasted on until the Gothic and Vandal invasions of Asia Minor and Africa finally cut off the requisite supply of wild beasts.⁴

Justinian's hostility towards the semi-pagan amusements of the people has been overrated. He rebuilt

¹ *Circ.* 450. Beugnot, ii. 25.

² Hoffmann, p. 36.

³ Yet it is clear from a law of 415 that these still went on (Rüdig. p. 81).

⁴ Onuph. Panvin. *l.c.* ; Mosheim, i. 413.

theatres, patronised athletic games, and was especially devoted to the equestrian contests of the circus, notwithstanding the insolence and lawlessness of the spectators.¹ Nevertheless we read that he abolished the Olympic games, which yet retained a pale reflection of their former splendour, and were celebrated at Elis with the accompaniment of pagan rites.²

Deprived of all external benefits, the pagans still retained the possession of their consciences. Such a possession, it is true, provided but an insecure asylum from the assaults of the victorious Church, for it had never been regarded as a necessary adjunct in the exercise of an idolatrous creed, whose moral sanction was derived from a mechanical compliance with a routine of worship. But granting the possibility of genuinely conscientious scruples in support of paganism,³ even this refuge was assailed by a policy which rendered pagans ineligible for any civil or military post, and even made the profession of their religion a penal offence.

Civil and
Military
Disabilities
inflicted
upon
Pagans.

¹ Gibbon, c. xl. See, too, Procopius, *Hist. Arcan.* xii. In a single uproar—that of *Nika*—thirty thousand people perished. (Proc. *Bell. Pers.* xxiv. 74 C). Cp. a curious dialogue in notes to *Hist. Arc.* tom. ii. p. 135.

² Chastel, p. 285.

³ Pagan martyrdom was *rare*, but not as St. Augustine implies *quite unknown* (*Enarr. in Ps.* 140). Cp. cases of Photius (Gibbon, xlvii.), Hierocles (Chastel, 246), Demetrius Chytas (Neander, iii. 45), etc. See Vict. Schultze, p. 432.

Ecclesiastical writers attribute to Constantine a variety of such measures. It is said that he intrusted the majority of the provinces to Christian prefects and that after the defeat of Magnentius, soldiers were required to submit to baptism on pain of dismissal.¹ Such statements involve gross exaggeration. It seems probable that a large majority of the contemporary magistrates whose names figure in the *Codex Theodosianus* were pagans; in fact, the social status and education of most Christians at this time would render them unfit for such appointments.² As regards the army, it is true that every means was taken to induce the troops to embrace the religion of the emperor. The Labarum preceding their columns, the Christian oratory set up when a halt was made, the presence of Christian clergy in their midst, and the enthusiastic piety of their sovereign³—all contributed to produce at any rate a nominal profession of Christianity amongst the soldiery, especially when the external symbols of paganism had been banished from their camps. But the fact

¹ Cf. Cedrenus, p. 272.

² Rüdiger, p. 15; Beugnot, ii. 128.

³ Cp. Sozom. i. 8: τὰ τούτων ἑπ' αὐτῷ συμβόλῳ τοῦ σταύρου κατεσήμεαι καὶ . . . εὐκτέριον οἶκον κατεσκεύασε . . . συνείποντο γὰρ καὶ ἱερεῖς καὶ διάκονοι. Cp. for the prevalence of Christian symbols at this time Schaff (Post-Nicene Period), vol. ii. 561. Cp., too, Procop. *De Aed.* c. ii. p. 10 D, and Du Cange, *Hist. Byz.* p. 109.

that a theistic formula¹ was daily recited by the whole army, would apart from other considerations, seem to indicate that pagans were still numerous in the ranks of the imperial legions.

The iniquity, or perhaps still more the inconvenience, of inflicting civil disabilities upon his pagan subjects was recognised by Theodosius the Great, under whom paganism was no bar to the acquisition of the highest offices :—

‘Sacricolis summos impertit honores
Dux bonus et certare sinit cum laude suorum
Nec pago implicitos per debita culmina mundi
Ire viros prohibet : quoniam coelestia nunquam
Terrenis solitum per iter gradientibus obstant.’²

Libanius, too, mentions that heathen magistrates were invited to the emperor’s table and even permitted to swear *πρὸς τῶν θεῶν* in the presence of the assembled Christian company.³

In 408 Honorius attempted the task which his father had declined, and issued an edict—probably in retaliation against the supporters of Eucherius—which excluded pagans from holding civil or military appointments. But this feeble monarch

¹ Eusebius, *Vit. Const.* iv. c. xx. : Σὲ μόνον οἶδαμεν θεὸν . . . σὲ βοηθὸν ἀνακαλούμεθα κ.τ.λ.

² Prudent. *adv. Symm.* i. 617-21.

³ ἀλλ’ οὐδὲ τῶν τιμῶν τοὺς γε τοιοῦτους ἀπεκλείσας ἀλλὰ καὶ . . . συσσίτους ἐποιήσω . . . συμφέρειν τῇ βασιλείᾳ νομίσας ἄνδρα δμῶντα θεοῦς (*Lib. Pro. Temp.* ii.).

was soon frightened into repealing so ill-judged a measure by the threatened resignation of his ablest officer, the pagan Generid.¹

A similar decree was issued by the younger Theodosius, who also required three sworn witnesses to attest the religion of any candidate for office.² What was the effect of these measures is unknown. But whatever vestiges of paganism yet survived in the ranks of the civil service were obliterated by the severity of Theodosius in the West and Justinian in the East. Those officials of the latter emperor who yet remained faithful to the religion of their forefathers were executed, tortured, or deprived of their goods;³ and it is alleged that the accusation of paganism was frequently employed by Justinian as a pretext for the seizure of his subjects' property.⁴ At any rate, the result was, as might have been expected, a large amount of hypocritical conversion.⁵

In 531 a systematic attempt was made to eradicate paganism from the Eastern empire. Offenders were given three months to make up their minds,

¹ Zosim. v. 46.

² Cf. *Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 21. Gothof., p. 32, wrongly calls this a law of Arcadius. *Vid.* Hoff. p. 33.

³ Procop. *Hist. Arcan.* c. xi. p. 35 D: ἐντεῦθεν [from heretics] ἐπὶ τοὺς Ἕλληνας καλουμένους τὴν δίωξιν ἤγεν αἰκιζόμενός τε τὰ σώματα καὶ τὰ χρήματα ληϊζόμενος.

⁴ *Ibid.* xix. p. 57 B.

⁵ Neander, iii. p. 119.

and at the end of that period, John of Cappadocia, a veritable wolf in sheep's clothing, scoured the country in his search for pagans. Large numbers were discovered in the capital, some of whom saved themselves from the penalties of the law by lecturing on dogmatic Christianity in the churches.¹ Especial severity was shown to apostates, who were finally excluded from public office and denied the power of making wills or receiving property. The drastic nature of this persecution can be gathered from the fact that high officials like Macedonius and Tribonianus were condemned during its prevalence ;² and their fate was probably shared by a multitude of more obscure, though equally obstinate, pagans.

In 556 a second crusade, again undertaken by John, met with even greater success than the former. On this occasion the vitality of heathenism in the East was attested by the discovery and baptism of no less than seventy thousand pagans ! Ninety-six churches were at once built for their reception ; and the minor absence of genuine devotion amongst the crowded congregations was more than counter-balanced by a splendid display of sacred vessels and sacerdotal vestments.³ Five years after this,

¹ Chastel, p. 289.

² Notes upon *Hist. Arc.* by N. Aleman., p. 132. [The reference to Suidas seems incorrect.]

³ Gibbon, c. xlvii,

another batch of pagans was unearthed in Constantinople. Their idols and books were burned in the Cynegium, and they themselves cruelly mutilated and paraded through the streets.¹

Attacks
upon Philo-
sophers and
Rhetori-
cians.

Its honours gone, monuments destroyed, and wealth confiscated—abandoned by the indifferent and fickle multitude—paganism yet found a welcome refuge in the schools. Philosophers and rhetoricians had always maintained an alliance with the ancient religion, and whenever the predominance of Christianity rendered any outward expression of hostility dangerous, they were enabled by a cautious demeanour to preserve paganism secretly in their midst.² In many cases, however, their enmity towards Christianity found vent in specious pleas for the worship of the gods and carefully worked out refutations of the rival religion. The writings of Eunapius, Zosimus, and Libanius are full of vehemence and even ferocity against the persecuting Christians, whose actions they declared to be inconsistent with the lovingkindness enjoined by their Master.³ On the other hand, the hatred of philosophy had been a fixed tradition of a large section of the early Church. ‘Quid ergo Athenis et Hierosolymis?’ says Tertullian, ‘quid Academiae

¹ Chastel, p. 289.

² Cp. συνείναι τοῖς ἀνθρώποις οὐ θεῖως ἀλλὰ πολιτικῶς (Synes. *Ep.* 136, p. 1525, Migne).

³ Lib. *Pro Temp.* ii. 179.

et Ecclesiae?'¹ This antagonism had, it is true, been softened on the Christian side by the discovery that the ἀνεπίκριτος διαφωνία of philosophic systems found its solution in the doctrine of the Logos; but it could not well disappear in face of the undiminished rancour of pagan thinkers. The spirit of Celsus and Porphyry still breathed in the pagan schools, and secession from the ancient religion was fatal to the prospects of a rhetorician.² In short, nothing helped more strongly to buttress up the falling structure of paganism, than the writings of philosophers, and the declamations of rhetoricians. Such compositions were full of pagan associations and exercised an insidious influence over the minds of younger students. That love for the antique which frequently forms so powerful a factor in a cultivated intellect, received with enthusiasm the stilted and turgid μέλεται of the period, saturated with classical quotations and mythological erudition.³ Libanius recognises the vital connection which

¹ Cp. *De Prescript. Hæret.*, ed. Rigalt, 205 A. See, too, the somewhat shallow *Irrisio Gentil. Philosophorum*, by Hermias, *passim*, e.g. κεκμήκαμεν ἤδη μεταβαλλόμενοι ἄνω καὶ κάτω τοῖς δόγμασι.

² Cedrenus, p. 327. Chrysostom would have been nominated as president of the school by Libanius, εἰ μὴ ἐσυλήθη ὑπὸ τῶν χριστιανῶν. *Vid. Eunap. Vit. Proaeres.* i. 92; Beugnot, i. 171 *sqq.*

³ Cp. οἱ Ἕλληνες διὰ τῆς εὐγλωττίας κατασύοουσι (Cyril, *Hieros. Cat.* iv. § 2). χαλεπὸν μὴ συναρπασθῆναι τοῖς τούτων ἐπαινέταις καὶ συνηγόροις (Greg. Naz. *Orat.* xc.).

existed between pagan rhetoric and pagan religion : the disappearance of the one, he thought, must involve the disappearance of the other.¹

The death of Julian was a terrible calamity to philosophic paganism. Libanius's expressions of sorrow are very striking—ὦ κοινῆς εὐδαιμονίας ἀρξαμένης ὁμοῦ καὶ πεπauμένης ;—it is like a cup of cool water snatched from the grasp of a thirsty wayfarer before he has done more than moisten his lips!² Deprived for a while of all the favours of the court, and all chances of a public career, the leaders of pagan thought in the West retired into the obscure rôle of private lecturers.³

Yet, on the whole, the treatment of pagan rhetoric and philosophy was marked by a singular moderation. The practice of coercing human thought in the name of religion was to a great extent reserved for subsequent ages, and during the period with which we are dealing, pagan thinkers were seldom persecuted as such, but almost always on the charge of magic. Neoplatonism was frequently degraded into a mere system of theurgy, not easily distinguishable from the vulgar and malevolent forms of sorcery. Even the humane Constantine caused

¹ Liban. *Orat.* xxvi.: οἰκεῖα γὰρ οἶμαι καὶ συγγενῇ ταῦτα ἀμφοτέρα, ἱερὰ καὶ λόγοι, κ.τ.λ.

² Liban. *Epitaph. in Julian.* i. 618.

³ Chastel, p. 244 ; Vict. Schultze, p. 205.

the philosopher Sopater to be beheaded on a charge of having delayed the corn-fleet δι' ὑπερβολὴν σοφίας. Constantius, who is blamed by Libanius for refusing to encourage the higher forms of education, put all the followers of Aedesius to death, with the exception of Maximus;¹ but this vigorous champion of paganism, the former tutor of Julian, was afterwards executed by Valentinian.² The philosophers who had flourished under the patronage of Julian experienced a painful reverse after his death. Torture was applied in order to recover the emoluments accorded them during the pagan revival, and some expired under this cruel treatment.³ A few years later, a large number fell victims to the cowardly superstition of Valens, and so severe was this persecution that many abandoned the private study, and still more the public profession, of the higher branches of learning.⁴ When criticism or personal violence failed, resort was had to the destruction of pagan literature. The Council of Ephesus in 431 condemned the works of Porphyry to the flames, and the bigoted Theophilus of Alexandria took advantage of an imperial edict to destroy the invaluable library of Alexandria, whose empty shelves, twenty

¹ Eunap. *Vit. Aedes.* p. 23.

² Socrates, iii. 1, 165 D.

³ Liban. *Epitaph. in Julian.* i. 619 sqq.: ὁ δὲ οὐκ εὐπορῶν δεθεῖς τέθνηκε, κ.τ.λ.

⁴ Ammian. Marcell. xxix. 1; Hoff. p. 31.

years later, brought a blush of shame to the face of Orosius.¹

Amid the confusion which followed this destruction of temples and library, many of the Alexandrian philosophers either perished or fled. One of these, Olympius, remained behind, and strove hard to comfort and encourage his fellow-pagans; but a mysterious chant of Alleluia, in the Serapeum, warned him that his task was hopeless, and he too escaped from the city.² Later on, the school was shaken to its foundations by the tragic death of Hypatia. Christian bigotry was too strong for academic thought. The ablest professors disappeared, and towards the end of the fifth century the lecture-rooms stood empty, while the circus and theatre were full.³

Driven from Alexandria, pagan philosophy found a home at Athens, and for some time maintained a show of independence and activity. But this restored vitality was stifled for a while by the invasion of Alaric. Synesius cursed the pilot who guided him to Athens at this calamitous period. The city, which had once witnessed two thousand pupils attending a single lecture,⁴ was now famous only for the honey of Hymettus. Academy, Stoa, and Lyceum

¹ Gibbon, c. xxviii., *note*.

³ Chastel, p. 249.

² Sozomen, vii. 15.

⁴ Gibbon, c. xl. § 7.

were empty and deserted—mere show places for strangers!¹ Yet when the flood of barbarism had passed, the genius and enthusiasm of Proclus bestowed a fresh lease of life upon the school. Legacies flowed in from many persons, who were perhaps more devoted to the pronounced paganism of the philosophers than to their metaphysical speculations. This prosperity was short-lived. The bigotry or the avarice of Justinian finally closed the schools and banished the lecturers. The persecuted philosophers took refuge beyond the frontiers of the empire, but the lukewarm enthusiasm of Chosroes, their patron, and the widespread immorality of his subjects, disappointed their hopes, and they returned to dwell in obscurity at Athens.²

Such were some of the main methods adopted for the suppression of the pagan religion and its accessories; it may be interesting to briefly consider by what agency these coercive measures were carried into execution, and how far they were justifiable.

The Execution, and Morality, of such Coercive Measures.

Notwithstanding Eusebius's assertion that the demolition of pagan temples under Constantine was effected without opposition or disturbance, it is significant that in one of the few certain cases of temple-destruction belonging to the reign of this

¹ Synesius, *Ep.* 135, p. 1524, ed. Migne: *κακὸς κακῶς ὁ δεῦρό με κομίσας ἀπόλοιτο ναύκληρος, κ.τ.λ.*

² Agathias, *Hist.* ii. 31.

emperor we find that a military escort was required to enforce the law.¹ In fact the imperial troops continued to assist from time to time in the work of annihilation; their co-operation was necessary, not only to quell resistance, but also to demolish the stupendous walls and foundations of the pagan temples.²

As a general rule the local magistrates were responsible for the execution of anti-pagan decrees, but, as we have noticed before, these officials, from sympathy, corruption, or indifference, were frequently averse to any rigid application of the legal penalties denounced against pagan obstinacy.

Occasionally the bishops were directly commissioned to carry out the imperial edicts, or were enabled by a right of general surveillance and control to stimulate the energy of the civil administration.³ Prelates like Marcus of Arethusa,⁴ Theophilus of Alexandria, Porphyrius of Gaza⁵ and the unfortunate Marcellus of Apamea,⁶ led mixed bodies of civilians, monks, and soldiery against pagan edifices and presided over a species of inquisitorial

¹ Eus. *Vit. Const.* 56: δεξιά στρατιωτική used in the demolition of Aesculapius's temple at Aegae.

² Eunap. *Vit. Aedes.* p. 44.

³ Episcopis . . . haec ipsa prohibendi ecclesiasticae manus tribuimus facultatem (*Cod. Theod.* xvi. 10, 19; Gothof. p. 27).

⁴ Neander, iii. 86.

⁵ *Vid. supra*, p. 10, *note*.

⁶ Gibbon, c. xxviii.

court, which dealt with persons accused of having sacrificed.¹ Chrysostom, though not personally engaged in the actual work of destruction, secured an edict from Arcadius for the overthrow of all the temples in Phoenicia, and his emissaries were furnished with ample means from the hands of pious and wealthy matrons, whose purse-strings were untied by the florid and persuasive eloquence of their bishop.²

But by far the most effective agents in the crusade against heathenism were the monks, whose religious fanaticism was impervious to any scruples of humanity or respect for the monuments of antiquity which might retard the activity of the soldiers.³ The severe morality of the primitive Hebrews was more agreeable to these persons than the gentler injunctions of the New Testament. Anything which had the slightest connection with idolatry or unorthodoxy was sufficient to goad them into a religious frenzy, and those of their numbers who happened to be slain in retaliation by the enraged pagans were openly proclaimed as saints who had secured the crown of martyrdom. The insolence, uncouthness, and hypocrisy of these so-called *σωφρονισταί* inspired

¹ Lib. *Pro Temp.* ii.

² *Phot. Biblioth.* p. 255.

³ Cp. Zosimus, v. 23, p. 279: *δυσχεραίνοντες δημοτικοί τε ὁμοῦ καὶ στρατιῶται τὴν τῶν μοναχῶν ἡτοῦν ἀνακόψαι θρασύτητα.*

sentiments of hatred and loathing amongst all classes of pagans;¹ nor is it improbable that their wanton destruction of architecture and sculpture has in many cases been falsely attributed by ecclesiastical writers to the imperial edicts, in order to excuse the ruthless violence of their partisans.²

Was such wholesale demolition of temples and statues on the part of the clergy legal? The answer must be in the negative. From Constantine to Justinian no imperial law authorised the bishops and monks to undertake the indiscriminate overthrow of pagan structures. Hence Libanius's complaint³—*μένοντος, ὃ βασιλεῦ, καὶ κρατοῦντος τοῦ νόμου θεοῦσιν ἐφ' ἱερά*—must be regarded as valid. These zealots destroyed the objects of idolatrous worship at their own risk, and occasionally met with a well-merited chastisement.⁴ At first sight, indeed, the fact that monks were frequently accompanied by troops would seem to imply the legality of their conduct. It is,

¹ Cf. Lib. *Pro Temp.* ii. 164 : οἱ δὲ μελανειμονοῦντες οὗτοι καὶ πλείω μὲν τῶν ἐλεφάντων ἐσθίοντες κ.τ.λ. Eunap. *Vit. Aed.* p. 45 : τυραννικὴν γὰρ εἶχεν ἐξουσίαν τότε πᾶς ἄνθρωπος μέλαιναν φορῶν ἐσθῆτα . . . ἀνθρώπους μὲν κατὰ τὸ εἶδος, ὃ δὲ βίος αὐτοῖς συνώδης κ.τ.λ. Cp. a short and sarcastic poem quoted by Boissonade, Eunap. i. p. 277. Cp. for their greed, Zosim. v. 23, p. 278 sq.; for their filthy habits, Rutil. *Numat.* i. 523 (p. 15, Teubner); for their unpopularity, Robertson, ii. 12 and 21.

² Rüdiger, p. 59.

³ Lib. *Pro Temp.* ii. 165.

⁴ At Alexandria, Raphia, Gaza, Petra, etc. Cf. Gieseler, i. 324 (Clark's Translation).

however, clear, that military detachments in remote districts of the empire were often at this time but little affected by the control of the central authorities, and did not scruple to participate in the nefarious schemes of private individuals.¹

From the fact that these lawless monks were seldom, if ever, punished by the civil authorities, M. Beugnot infers that the Deity expressly favoured their purpose and sanctioned their outrages.² But it is perhaps more satisfactory to attribute the immunity they enjoyed to the fact that the officials of a Christian emperor were sometimes reluctant to punish the champions of a favoured creed, and that in most cases the pagans were, after the first excitement, too lethargic to plead the cause of a religion which had never influenced their hearts, or of gods who were impotent to protect their own interests.

In judging of the morality of the anti-pagan policy pursued by the emperors and the Church, our verdict must be modified by the reflection that the severity of the coercive laws was frequently minimised or altogether evaded. Yet in many cases the drastic provisions of the imperial edicts were rigorously

¹ Cp. Liban. *περὶ προστασιῶν* (ii. p. 493), *passim*,—and a law of Valens,—‘abstineant patrociniis agricolae,’ etc. (*Cod. Theod.* xi. 24, 2. Gothof. iv. p. 174).

² Beugnot, i. 303.

enforced with the almost unanimous approval of the Christian hierarchy. Bishops were ready enough to employ for their own ends that interference of the civil power, which in earlier centuries had been denounced by the persecuted faith as harsh and unwarrantable, and the zeal which influenced their hearts appears to have been often devoid of the most elementary principles of rectitude.¹ Ecclesiastics who, like St. Augustine, could invite the State to forcibly convert or annihilate the unorthodox, would scarcely be expected to exhibit much tolerance towards idolaters. Yet the victorious Church might well have left the dying embers of paganism to their inevitable extinction without resorting to the 'pillage, torture, and death of the poor villagers'² who refused to replace the simple faith of their forefathers by a new and unintelligible religion. In short, it may fairly be said that whatever traces of pity and consideration are found in the treatment of paganism were due, not to the influence of the Christian clergy, but to the prudence or benevolence of the emperors:

¹ Cf. Robertson, i. 387. Gibbon, ii. 210; iii. 271 *sqq.* To say in defence of such conduct that 'spiritual revolutions spring from a spiritual need' is 'nil ad rem.' This *explains* the fact, but *does not justify* it. It is only fair to add that there were some few happy exceptions to the persecuting spirit of the Church at this time. Cp. Neander, iii. p. 103.

² See 'The Greek Oracles,' by Mr. Myers, in 'Hellenica,' p. 491.

little mercy was shown by the official representatives of a religion which professed allegiance to the Incarnation of Love.

If indeed the end justified the means, the external results of this coercion would partially condone its rigorous methods. The demolition of a pagan sanctuary was frequently a signal for the construction upon its site of a Christian Church, well filled with a crowd of converts.¹ In some towns the conversion of a governor was followed by that of the entire population,² just as the troops who had followed Julian and acquiesced in the eccentricities of his pagan enthusiasm, willingly called themselves Christians after his death, in order to satisfy the scruples of his successor. It must be remembered that in the case of paganism, the abolition of an external worship was rarely compensated for by the exercise of private devotions, for the cult of the Lares and Penates had never taken root in the East, and in the West the few domestic rites which still survived were abolished by a law of Theodosius I.³ Hence the flexible dispositions of the heathen when deprived of their temples sometimes adapted themselves to a changed

¹ Cp. Procop. *De Aedif.* vi. 2, p. 111.

² Cp. Ecclus. x. 2: κατὰ τὸν ἡγούμενον τῆς πόλεως πάντες οἱ κατοικοῦντες αὐτήν. See, too, Chastel, p. 357.

³ Cp. Beugnot, ii. p. 209.

environment, and Christian churches were frequented by men who, with regard to their former convictions, were *χθὲς προσκυνηταί, σήμερον ὑβρισται*.¹

Nevertheless these stern methods of coercion brought a Nemesis upon themselves. Sincerity is incompatible with a forced profession, and even the most pronounced adherents of such a policy acknowledged the 'unspeakable hypocrisy'² of many nominal converts, who 'changed their religion as readily as their coat.'³ Still worse, in order to facilitate the ingress of the pagan multitude, idolatrous practices were transported wholesale within the frontiers of the Church: 'they paganised Christianity in order to Christianise paganism.'

¹ Greg. Naz. ap. Hoff. p. 20. Cp. Sozom. vii. 20. After the demolition of their temples the Egyptian pagans ἀπορία εὐκτηρίων οἴκων . . . προσεθίσθησαν ταῖς ἐκκλησίαις φοιτᾶν. .

² εἰρωνείαν ἀλεκτον. . . . (Euseb. *Vit. Const.* iv. 54).

³ ὥσπερ ἱμάτιον ταχέως τὴν θρησκείαν μετεμφιέσαντο (Asterius ap. Neand. iii. p. 69, *note*).

CHAPTER III

THE INHERENT WEAKNESS OF THE PAGAN RELIGION, AND THE FITNESS OF CHRISTIANITY TO TAKE ITS PLACE

A RELIGION which has ceased to influence the conscience may yet retain an outward control over the mass of its adherents by the splendour of its ritual or the vigour of its priesthood; and had paganism possessed a sacerdotal class as strong as that which dictated the policy of ancient Egypt, more resistance would doubtless have been offered to the victorious advance of Christianity. But even at its most flourishing period, the worship of the gods was conducted by a body of men whose functions more nearly resembled those of the magistrate than those of the priest, and who were little else than public officials appointed to guard the treasures of the various temples and to preside over certain rites, required by the conservatism of statesmen and derided by their common-sense.

The use of a generic term like 'paganism' is apt to obscure the real condition of pre-Christian

External
weakness of
Paganism.

religions. Amidst a practically unlimited multiplication of heathen deities anything like religious union was impossible. Each cult had its own hierarchy and its own traditions, nor did the demolition of a temple of Apollo provoke any sympathy amongst the worshippers of Cybele. Maximin Daza had endeavoured to consolidate the pagan opposition to Christianity by the establishment of a ἀρχιερεὺς in each province,¹ but his attempt was a failure, and only in two places throughout the empire was the authority of a sovereign pontiff exercised over a subordinate priesthood, viz., at Rome and in Egypt.²

Again, the energy of the pagan priesthood was crippled by that utter want of independence which marked their relations towards the civil authority. Except in the case of some few sacerdotal families in Greece, hereditary priesthoods were at this period non-existent. Priests were elected by lot, by the municipal bodies, or by direct nomination from the emperor.³ Even their formal privileges and duties were strictly limited. Appeals from the decision of the Pontifical College to the assembly of the people were frequent; the consultation of the Sibylline books could not be undertaken by a priest without

¹ Euseb. *Hist. Eccl.* ix. 4.

² Benjamin Constant, *Polythéisme Romain*, vol. i. p. 32.

³ Chastel, p. 364. Very rarely co-optation was permitted.

the express sanction of a 'senatus consultum,' and even the empty ceremony of 'servare de caelo' was occasionally forbidden.¹

Lastly, the ministers of the ancient religion possessed no hold upon the consciences of the laity; when paganism fell upon evil days and its external grandeur disappeared, the dignity once enjoyed by its priesthood was exchanged for contempt and neglect at the hands of their followers.² What a signal attestation to the power of the Church was afforded by Julian's endeavour to reconstitute his pagan priesthood on the model of the Christian hierarchy! Even at a period when the establishment of Christianity as a State religion had produced arrogance and worldliness amongst the clergy of the towns, the devotion and piety of their provincial brethren is commended by so unprejudiced a critic as Ammianus Marcellinus.³ But the close ties subsisting between such ministers and their flocks were absent from pagan communities, who were seldom influenced and encouraged by the example of a pure and upright priesthood. Hence Julian's advice that the monopoly of charity and good works

¹ Benj. Constant, i. 40, 41.

² Cp. τῖς ἔχει ἱερῶν κατασκαπτομένων ἱερῆας ἐντίμους (Liban. *Orat. Pro. Temp.*). See Gieseler, i. 308.

³ Ammian. Marcell. xxvii. 3, 15.

should not be left in the hands of the *δυσσεβείς Γαλιλαῖοι*, that alms-houses should be built in every town, and that the lives of pagan ministers should be marked by sanctity and sobriety.¹

But whatever attempts may have been temporarily produced by Julian's enthusiasm were dissipated by his untimely death. Under pressure of constant persecution from the dominant religion, the priests of paganism recognised the hopelessness of a cause whose fortunes had never been under their own control. 'If any one chances to enter their temples,' says Chrysostom, 'he will see the walls covered with spiders' webs and the statues so coated with dust that neither eyes, noses, or any other feature are any longer distinguishable. Broken fragments of altars remain, but are so overgrown with grass, that if one did not know what they were he would mistake them for heaps of rubbish. Why is this? Because formerly they could pilfer and gormandise from the proceeds of their office, but now—why should they any longer trouble themselves?'²

Popular paganism presents the picture of a

¹ See Julian, *Ep.* 49, *passim*:—ἐπειτα παραινέσον ἱερέα μήτε θεάτρῳ παραβάλλειν μήτε ἐν καπηλείῳ πίνειν . . . ξενοδοχεῖα καθ' ἐκάστην πόλιν κατέστησον πυκνά, ἵνα ἀπολαύσωσιν οἱ ξένοι . . . φιλανθρωπίας, οὐ τῶν ἡμετέρων μόνον, ἀλλὰ καὶ ἄλλων ὅστις ἂν ἐνδεθῇ χρημάτων. Surely Neander's sneer at this last provision is undeserved!

² *De S. Babyl.* p. 544, Migne.

religious system apparently incapable of modification or progress. Throughout the period with which we are dealing, the uneducated classes who yet remained in heathenism, and more especially the simple country-folk, continued to worship the capricious, cruel, and lustful gods of their forefathers. The turpitude of pagan deities forms the 'crambe repetita' of Christian apologists of the fourth and fifth, as well as of the two preceding, centuries.¹ Much light is thrown upon the condition of a provincial community about 450 by the writings of Maximus of Turin. His treatise against pagans is saturated with all the trite commonplaces against the immorality of pagan gods whose worship was still shared to some extent by baptized Christians!²

Amongst the educated, however, a higher form of paganism had come into being. Men like Julian and Libanius fully appreciated the beauties of the ancient religion in proportion as they found the current beliefs crude and distasteful. Hence arose that new force which strove, but in vain, to support and rehabilitate the decaying system—the application of allegory to the materials of the popular mythology. This veritable disease of exegesis,

¹ Cf., for example, Athan. *De Incarn.* c. xlix. 3, and liii. 2.

² *Vid.* Tract. iv. *Contra Pagan.* (full of lacunae), p. 721 sqq., ed. Romae, 1784.

which has so seriously retarded the progress of our own religion, is indeed the only method by which even now 'a professedly orthodox mind, substantially advanced beyond the letter, is able to conceal from itself the inward contradiction':

'The intelligible forms of ancient poets,
The fair humanities of old religion,
The Power, the Beauty, and the Majesty
That had their haunt in dell or piny mountain,
Or forest by slow stream or pebbly spring,
Or chasms and wat'ry depths ;—all these have vanished,
They live no longer in the faith of reason !
But stili the heart doth need a language, still
Doth the old instinct sing back the old names.'

To breathe the breath of life into the dry bones of these defunct deities, to restore the beauties of the ancient creed by a fresh interpretation of its symbols—such was the object of the Neoplatonic school.¹ Under the deft treatment of these allegorisers, the revolting myth of Atys and Cybele becomes an elaborate representation of certain psychological events.² The goddess is Providence; her lover is human intelligence striving to overstep its finite conditions and enter upon the realm of the transcendental. Atys's head-dress is the canopy of heaven, his self-mutilation the necessary limitation of human knowledge. Other mythological tales are handled with a similar freedom under a system of

¹ Lewes, *Hist. Phil.* i. 404. ² Cf. Iulian, *Orat.* v. p. 214 *sq.*

interpretation whose only standard appears to have been the subjective caprice of the expositor.

The weak points in this application of allegory were vigorously assailed by the patristic writers. If these repulsive stories, they argued, were literally true, how could such gods merit the admiration of rational men? If, on the contrary, the original myth was fictitious and useful only as a signpost to physical and psychical realities, why should we be conducted to truth by such foul paths, when we could arrive at it by a less circuitous and less dangerous course? ¹

In short, such ingenuity might perhaps cater to the wants of the sophist and the pedant, but could scarcely pretend to satisfy the ordinary religious needs of mankind. While Neoplatonism helped to smooth away intellectual difficulties from the minds of educated pagans, its influence upon the lower classes was thoroughly unsettling; for these allegorical and far-fetched interpretations undermined the foundations of a creed which apart from their intrusion would have continued to exist in its childish simplicity. Brought face to face with laborious attempts to explain away long-established beliefs, many would naturally become detached from a

¹ Cp. Firmic. Matern. *De Errore Prof. Relig.* p. 6, ed. Lugd. Bat., 1672: 'Pone hanc veram esse sacrorum istorum rationem . . . quid addis incestum, quid adulterium? . . . physica ratio, quam dicis alio genere coletur.'

religion which they saw to be untenable, but could not identify with a string of philosophical abstractions. Neoplatonism, so far from rehabilitating old beliefs in the popular mind, was influential only in accelerating their decay.

It is true that the essence of Neoplatonism was independent of the old forms of worship, and it is probable that the pagan fervour of many of its votaries was evoked, not so much by any real sympathy for the worn-out creed as by a bitter enmity towards Christianity. Such hostility is at first sight surprising, when we reflect on the marked similarities between the two systems.¹ This expiring effort of ancient thought has been called a 'philosophy of revelation': mere introspection, it taught, unaided by the divine influence cannot afford the coveted knowledge. 'Hermes, messenger of Zeus, reveals to us the paternal will of Zeus and so teaches us wisdom': faith, not reason, is the organ of religious apprehension—*μυστικῶς γινῶναι οὐκ ἀπ' ἀποδείξεων*,—and even the ecstasy of an Alexandrian mystic may find a counterpart in some abnormal forms of Christian temperament:—

' In such access of mind, in such high hour
Of visitation from the living God,
Thought was not, in enjoyment it expired.'

¹ Cp. Allen, *Continuity of Christian Thought*, p. 73.

A further indication of the similarity between the two religions is afforded by the extraordinary influence exercised for centuries in the Church by the writings of the Pseudo-Dionysius the Areopagite;¹ and the germs of truth latent in the mystical doctrines of Neoplatonism had served to bring Justin, Athenagoras, Clement, Synesius, and others to the fountain-head of Christianity, in their search for further light.

Nevertheless such resemblances were merely superficial. Neoplatonism at its best was only adapted for the use of an intellectual and cultured minority. As in the case of all other systems of Greek philosophy, its esoteric exclusiveness confined its influence within the narrowest limits, and prevented the dissemination of any definite teaching *περὶ ἀθανασίας καὶ τοῦ κατ' ἀρετὴν βίου*.² The future life of the mystic was a pantheistic absorption, a 'swooning into the Godhead,' a *θεία χορεία* of impersonality round the throne of a Deity who was the 'mere residuum of intellectual analysis'—from whom creation proceeded by an accidental overflow of divine essence.³ A still more terrible deficiency in the system was its utter lack of moral guidance.

¹ See Dorner, *Person of Christ*, Div. II. vol. i. p. 164.

² Athan. *De Incarn.* 47, 5.

³ *Vid.* Plotinus, *Enn.* v. 2, 1 : τὸ ἐν . . . τέλειον δὲ οὖν ὑπερεβρύη καὶ τὸ ὑπερπληρὲς αὐτοῦ πεποίηκεν ἄλλο.

Γνῶθι σεαυτόν was viewed by Socrates as an exhortation to an ethical study of oneself — such introspection would lead to the discovery of a practical morality. But the self-knowledge of the Platonic schools was metaphysical rather than moral; its object was the contemplation of existence, not the regulation of our actions.

Unfitted to become in any sense a universal system, Neoplatonism frequently failed to satisfy even the privileged few who aspired to appreciate its doctrines. Their enthusiasm cooled under the strain of an apparently fruitless asceticism. Isolation from the enjoyments and occupations of the world is rendered more intelligible when understood to find its reward in some manifestation of divine approval; but when a Plotinus attained the supreme bliss of contemplating τὸ ἔν on only four occasions and Porphyry only once,¹ the lesser lights might well begin to think that the realisation of such psychical experiences was scarcely in proportion to the trouble expended upon their acquisition.

So it came to pass that in most cases what was at first a philosophic religion ended in a vulgar superstition, and mystical ecstasy was replaced by theurgical and astrological practices. These

¹ Chastel, p. 333.

enthusiasts had, like the Galatians of old, 'begun in the spirit and ended in the flesh.' In answer to the incantations of Maximus, the statue of Hecate laughed aloud and the torches in her hands burst into flame.¹ Iamblichus could raise himself into the air and cause his garments to change colour at will. Sosistratus appeared at the same moment in different places.² But Proclus exercised a still greater control over the forces of nature: his magic globe could produce a rainfall and even arrest the progress of an earthquake. When the statue of Pallas was dragged from the Parthenon, the goddess in all her beauty appeared to the philosopher and invited him to make ready for her reception; and the favour of heaven was sensibly displayed before the eyes of his pupils in a celestial light which encircled the head of their master.³

How strange a combination of childish superstition and philosophic thought! It may perhaps be traced to two sources—the desire of the human soul for some visible form of communion with the unseen, coupled with an æsthetic love for the beauty of ancient paganism. Unable to appreciate a religion which subordinates the beautiful to the good, the

¹ Eunap. *Vit. Max.* i. p. 49 *sqq.* ² B. Constant, ii. p. 211.

³ Marinus, *Vit. Procli*, c. xxiii. p. 57: *φῶς περιθέον αὐτοῦ κεφαλὴν*. For the magic *σφαῖρα* or *lynx*, see c. xxviii. p. 69; for the vision of Pallas, c. xxx. p. 76.

'anima naturaliter pagana' of all ages has found utterance in the querulous complaint:—

'Great God! I'd rather be
A pagan suckled in a creed outworn;
So might I, standing on this pleasant lea,
Have glimpses that would make me less forlorn;
Have sight of Proteus rising from the sea;
Or hear old Triton blow his wreathèd horn.'

But a religion does not necessarily die because it has ceased to satisfy the moral and intellectual needs of mankind; for when a period in its history is reached, when loftier motives for its continuance have disappeared, its adaptation to the worldly interests of the few, and its historic prestige in the eyes of the many, will still conduce to its preservation.

In the West the aristocratic families were intimately connected with the national worship,¹ and the members of the priesthood essential to the proper conduct of State ceremonies would naturally strive for the continued exercise of their lucrative functions.

And in a still wider field paganism had once been bound up with national traditions. Each of its separate cults had originally been connected with independent communities. 'The life of the πόλις

¹ Cp. the numerous sacerdotal titles possessed by the nobility. See Wilmann, cap. vi. (*Viri ordinis Senatorii*), *passim*: e.g. 1210, 1211, 1224, 1228, etc.

was reflected in them; their festivals were national festivals; their traditions, fragments of national history; their gods, kings and heroes clothed with the honours of apotheosis.' Each city and village had jealously preserved its own especial cult as a precious testimony to its autonomy.

But in the fourth and fifth centuries, little support accrued to the waning religion from either of these sources. Under the stress of constant persecution the pagan hierarchy gradually disappeared, and the aristocratic priesthoods of Rome were scattered far and wide by the capture of the capital in 408.¹ On the other hand considerations of nationality had long been obsolete. Caracalla's universal grant of the *civitas* had only officially recognised a fact already accomplished, for ethnic traditions had broken down before the advance of the Roman eagles, and all the nations of the empire had been reduced to one level. Old religious sanctions, derived from a feeling of duty to local deities, disappeared in a revolution which obliterated national landmarks and introduced strange gods. Yet no philosophic or pagan system had been adequate to fill the void:—

πατρίους παραδοχὰς ἄς θ' ὁμηλικας χρόνῳ
κεκτήμεθ', οὐδεὶς αὐτὰ καταβαλεῖ λόγος.²

¹ Even remote Bethlehem was full of these fugitive aristocrats. Jerome (ap. Beugn. ii. 113).

² Eurip. *Bacchae*, 200-202.

As the gifted author of *Ecce Homo* has well pointed out, the cosmopolitanism of the Stoics was little else than a hollow profession, of small practical value; it possessed no remedy for the healing of the nations. The stoic Juvenal works himself into a frenzy of bitterness because racial distinctions no longer prevail and the freeborn Roman has ceased to be a privileged person:—

‘Usque adeo nihil est quod nostra infantia caelum
Hausit Aventini, bacca nutrita Sabina?’¹

The brotherhood of man had, so to speak, come upon the world unexpectedly. No philosophic system was able to inculcate its infinite value. It remained for Christianity to bestow upon it the stamp of divine approval.

Although the citizen of a separate creed and country had ceased to be a factor in the empire, the religious needs of the *individual* remained. But the pagan religion, based largely upon material interests—whose heaven was a pale and cold reflection of the world, whose future life was vague and cheerless,—what power had this to console and encourage at a period when the environment of mankind produced in every direction gloomy views of the present and pessimistic anticipations of the future? Civilisation was palpably in a state of

¹ *Sat.* iii. 84, 85. Cp. *Ecce Homo*, p. 127-8.

decay before the gradual encroachment of barbarian races, and civic life was rendered so burdensome by the weight of imperial taxation that thousands sought in the seclusion of monastic societies release from its intolerable conditions.¹ During the unspeakable calamities of war, pestilence, and famine which marked this most unhappy period of the world's history, the face of the Deity became obscured from the eyes of mankind by the awful mists which had settled on human prosperity and happiness.² Men ceased to believe either the love or the providence of God.³

The fall of paganism, inevitable from the assaults of the civil authority and its own intrinsic weakness, was hastened by the existence of a religion which supplied a practical motive for a devout life, and the certainty of a future existence.

The fitness of Christianity to take the place of Paganism in the fourth and fifth centuries.

The sober, yet elevated spirit of Christianity was a

¹ The monks of Tabenne numbered fifty thousand (Robertson, ii. 7) ! See Arnold, *Provincial Administration*. Cp. the case of Arsenius, tutor of Arcadius (Bright's *Ch. Hist.* p. 221).

² Cp. for the latter part of the period, Procop. *Hist. Arc.* c. xviii. *passim* : *μυριάδας μυριάδων μυρίας φημι ἀπολωλεκέναι* (53 B). Cp. Sidon. Apoll. *Ep.* viii. 6 : 'mundus jam senescens.' Orient. *Comm.* ii. 185 : 'labentis funera mundi.' Fulgent. ap. Chastel 'nostri temporis aerumnosa miseria.'

³ Salvian's *De Gub. Dei* was written to counteract this prevalent scepticism, but he fully realises the misery of his times : 'ubi sunt antiquae Romanorum opes ac dignitates ? Timebantur Romani veteres, nos timemus. . . . O infelicitates nostras, ad quid devenimus !' (vi. p. 128 sq., ed. Migne.)

happy mean between the crudities of pagan materialism and the exaggerated idealism of the Neoplatonic philosophy. Plotinus blushed because he had a body, and rejoiced in his last hour that his personality was on the verge of extinction; the Christian valued his body as a 'temple of the Spirit' and knew nothing of an impersonal immortality. His priests were neither totally absorbed in contemplation nor totally devoted to a routine of ceremonial functions. Preaching, meditation, prayer, control of schools and hospitals, care of prisoners—all these existed side by side in the everyday life of a Christian minister. Christianity was, it is true, at this time disfigured by perversion and corruption; but in all ages we must judge of its value not so much from the more salient facts of its history, as from its power for good amongst the myriads of mankind who, for the most part, have 'lived without a history and perished without a memorial,' but who in the anxieties of life have been guided by its counsels, and in the hour of death 'cheered by its hope of immortality.'¹

The thaumaturgic powers of Christian monks and their marvellous asceticism gained many converts. One hundred and twenty-seven pagans at Gaza were led by a miracle of rain-making to cry—ὁ Χριστὸς μόνος θεός, αὐτὸς μόνος ἐνίκησεν.² A similar result

¹ Robertson, ii. 75. ² Marc. Diac. *Vit. Porphy. Gaz.*, ed. Haupt, § 21.

was produced by the spectacle of the fanatical Simeon chained to a mountain crag.¹ But a less questionable method of conversion was provided by the pure and noble lives of professing Christians. When the Church people of Nicomedia fed the starving rustics of the district, the grateful pagans sang praises to the God of their benefactors, whom they described as the only pious and god-fearing men.²

While Christianity was practical, it was also *universal*. The crying need for a cosmopolitan religion had found no satisfaction from the arid formulae of Stoicism or the philosophic revival of paganism. It is true that some Neoplatonic teachers had endeavoured to establish a view of the Deity which might form the basis of a vast religious syncretism. Proclus called himself a 'high priest of the Universe,' and the ordinary mystic might, whilst refusing exclusive adherence to any, regard himself as 'an honorary member of all religious systems.' But, as we have seen, the esoteric spirit of Neoplatonism rendered it incapable of any widespread influence. 'The self-seeking of the nations, the pride of rank, the frivolous treatment of women, the cruel ill-usage of the slave'—all these evils, invincible by any previous system, would yield alone to that religion in

¹ This was before he became a Stylite.

² Neander, iii. 6.

which there was neither 'Greek nor Jew, barbarian, Scythian, bond or free.'

In other respects the Christianity of the fourth and fifth centuries, by adapting itself to popular requirements, appropriated the advantages hitherto enjoyed by its rival. Paganism over and above its historic prestige was well equipped for impressing the sensuous tendencies of the people. Its pompous festivals, ceremonies, and symbols all conduced to render it attractive to the masses.¹ On the other hand, the classical spirit of its mythology, and its connection with historical and philosophic literature invested it with a singular charm in the eyes of its more cultivated supporters.

Celsus had sneered at the Christianity of his day as only fit for beggars and serfs. The 'extremely pure and spiritual' worship of the early Christians—to quote the words of Gibbon—lent little motive for any alteration in the simplicity of their devotional practices. Christology had not yet developed into an ecclesiastical science, nor the public posting service become demoralised from the incessant movement of argumentative bishops.² The spiritual adoration of a God 'unicus, solitarius, destitutus,' without temples, altars, or shrines, was openly assailed as atheism by men in whose minds religion was

¹ See Beugnot, ii. 265.

² Ammian. Marcell. xxi. 16, 18.

associated with the striking embellishments of pagan worship.

But this primitive simplicity was not destined to be permanent. All ideals before they can become adapted to current use must to some extent be vulgarised and dragged in the mud of conventionalism, nor do religious ideals form any exception to the rule. Various causes had combined to render Christianity less obnoxious to pagan prejudices. Great changes were brought about by Constantine's reign. The Christian community found itself no longer 'latebrosa et lucifugax, in publicum muta, in angulis garrula':¹ the clergy grew wealthy and ostentatious, and the public ritual of the Church more gorgeous and elaborate. In view of the great influx of converts, the tone of Church discipline became relaxed, and pagan usages coated with a transparent varnish of Christianity were admitted wholesale. 'The most respectable bishops,' says Gibbon, 'had persuaded themselves that the ignorant rustics would more cheerfully renounce the superstitions of paganism, if they found some resemblance, some compensation in the bosom of Christianity.'

Moreover, in spite of the laboured definitions of Church councils, the humanity of our Lord had come to be little else than a *μάταιον εἶδος*—a form without

¹ Minuc. Felix. *Octav.* p. 75, ed. Lugd. Bat., 1672.

contents. The Man-God of the Gospels had well-nigh disappeared from human contact into the mysterious darkness of the Trinity, and a fresh series of intermediaries was required by semi-pagan converts who could make little of this Apollinarianised Christ, but found the adoration of saints, martyrs, and relics congenial to their tastes.

By a concession to the popular demand for an impressive externalism, the Church had largely increased the number of her members. Other inducements were provided to secure the suffrages of the more cultivated classes.

The struggling brotherhood of 'not many wise, not many mighty,' the followers of the 'crucified sophist,' taunted in earlier days with the uncritical and unphilosophical nature of their beliefs, had naturally taken up an attitude of marked hostility towards secular learning. But this feeling of enmity had by the fourth century given place to a gradual recognition of the value of rhetoric and philosophy. The subjects of Christian oratory were more adapted for the display of enthusiastic eloquence than the commonplace themes of pagan rhetoric. Isidore of Pelusium fearlessly appeals to the judgment of Libanius in maintaining the superiority of Chrysostom over all contemporary orators.¹ The two Gregories,

¹ Isidor. *Ep.* 42.

Basil of Caesarea, Chrysostom, and other Christian writers of the period, are unanimous in expressing the debt they owe to pagan models: their letters and homilies are often full of Homeric and mythological allusions.

The early prejudices of the Church against philosophy had likewise been overcome by the efforts of her more enlightened children. Christian dogmas were put into philosophic moulds, and all systems of thought referred ultimately to one divine source—the ubiquitous influence of the *Λόγος σπερματικός*. Eusebius discovers in pre-Christian learning a *παρασκευὴ εὐαγγελική*. Nemesius, bishop of Emesa, borrows some of his metaphysics from Aristotle, and his doctrine of the pre-existence of souls from Plato. Johannes Philoponus combined peripatetic tenets with the dogmatics of his Church. The good Synesius, a former pupil of Hypatia, found that the faith of Christ was ‘*οὐ φιλοσοφίας ἀπόβασις, ἀλλ’ εἰς αὐτὴν ἀνάβασις*.’¹ In short, Christianity had ‘become a philosophy without ceasing to be a religion.’

Thus, in the struggle with paganism, Christianity contrived to acquire for itself the several advantages possessed by its rival. The taste of the vulgar for

¹ Cp. Synesius, *Ep.* 140, p. 1533 (Migne): *φιλοσοφία χρώμενος εἰς τὸ θεῖον ποδηγετούση*.

a gorgeous ritual, the love of the educated for a refined literature and the speculative tendencies of the philosophical—all found some points of contact in the eclectic Christianity of the fourth and fifth centuries.

CHAPTER IV

THE LAST DAYS OF PAGANISM

FROM the calamities of barbarian invasion, Christianity suffered as well as paganism ; but whereas the former religion was able after the first shock to replace its ruined churches and slain clergy, the latter possessed no recuperative power, and sank beneath the blow. Had the conquerors retained their primitive creeds, the pantheon of vanquished deities might have been revived and strengthened by the alliance of Woden and Thor. But, as it was, the effete polytheism of Greece and Rome had little attraction for these Northern idolaters. The Alemanni and Heruli remained faithful to the gods of their ancestors ; in every other case the invaders as well as the mercenary defenders of the empire were either already Arians or else exchanged their paganism for the faith of the Gospel.

Amid the devastations which marked the advance of Goth, Hun, or Vandal, most of the temples which yet survived the violence of monks or the ravages

Barbarian
invasions.

of decay, were given to the flames. Such destruction was not confined to religious edifices; 'everywhere,' says St. Augustine, 'the theatres, those haunts of wickedness, are falling in ruin.'¹ The impoverished inhabitants, while longing for the restoration of their places of entertainment,² could no longer afford the money requisite to rebuild them, or secure wild beasts for the games of the circus. Side by side with the minor loss of popular amusements, the more serious pagans mourned for the ruin of their schools. The provinces of the empire, assailed by war and pestilence, could no longer furnish a regular supply of pupils. Several of the ablest professors of the Athenian school were slain by barbarians in their country houses—Hilarius near Corinth, Proterius in Cephalonia—and amid the horrors of invasion the Greeks had no longer either inclination or leisure for philosophical studies.

The fall
of Rome,

Lactantius had expressed a belief that the fall of Rome would prove the immediate precursor of the end of the world, and several Christian writers of

¹ 'Per omnes paene civitates cadunt theatra, caveae turpitudinum' (Aug. *De Cons. Evang.* p. 1068, Migne).

² Cp. for this, Salv. *De Gub. Dei*, vi. p. 125 (ed. Migne), after the destruction of Trèves: 'pauci nobiles qui excidio superfuerant quasi pro summo deletae urbis remedio circenses ab imperatoribus [Honorius and Arcadius] postulabant'—an almost exact parallel to Macaulay's remark that if all England were laid in ruins by an earthquake, the survivors would have a dinner-party upon the *débris* to celebrate the event!

the period participate in the despair and dejection which pervaded the empire after the overthrow of its capital. But the more general feeling amongst the enemies of paganism was one of joy and self-congratulation over the fall of a city which they described under the names of Babylon and Sodom. Orosius openly regretted that Stilicho had frustrated Radagaisus's attempt upon Rome, while St. Augustine justifies his want of sympathy for the suffering inhabitants by asking whether, after all, any of them had suffered as keenly as the patriarch Job.¹

There was full warrant for this unpatriotic conduct from the Church's point of view. Edicts which had laid low temples far and wide had exercised little force within the walls of the privileged city, which still preserved in something like their former splendour the religious ceremonies of the past.² But with the capture of Rome the last stronghold of paganism disappeared. The Roman aristocracy who for centuries had been the natural guardians of the

¹ Augustin. *De Excid. Urbis*, p. 718, Migne.

² Cp. Salv. *De Gub. Dei*, vi. p. 122, ed. Baluz. 'Quid enim? numquid non consulibus et pulli adhuc (*circ.* 450) gentilium sacrilegiorum more pascuntur . . . et paene omnia fiunt quae etiam illi quondam pagani veteres frivola . . . duxerunt?' About A.D. 400, 424 temples existed in Rome (Gibb. ii. 28, 201; Beug. i. 266, says less). Cp. Aug. *Ep.* 36: 'ecclesiam toto terrarum orbe diffusam, *exceptis Romanis*.' For later evidence, see Procop. *Bell. Goth.* iv. 21; Beug. ii. 300; also Bonifacii *Epp.* 51, ed. Giles, vol. i.

ancient religion were scattered far and wide, the altars were desolate, the auguries neglected.

Vitality of
rural
paganism.

The non-political and more genuine paganism, however, which flourished in the remote districts of the West was not overwhelmed entirely by the collapse of the empire. The yearly round of agricultural duties was connected with the calendar of rural festivals, and when paganism had been banished from the towns, it still survived in the plains and forests, until it was followed into its retreats and partially extirpated by zealous monks. Even in our own days, Tuscan peasants invoke the ancient guardian deities of field-crop and vintage,¹ and travellers in the Pyrenees can still hear the cry of 'Iacche! Iacche!' as the country-folk winnow their corn.²

Survivals of
Paganism.

An interesting monograph might be written on the late survivals of paganism in the Roman empire. These for the most part lie outside the scope of this essay, and can only receive a cursory notice. The flexibility of the contemporary Church,

¹ See a most interesting paper read before the Folklore Society, printed in *The Times*, October 6, 1892. Cp. 'Pictor Sacrilegus' in *Contemporary Review*, August, 1891.

² I am indebted for this fact to my friend Mr. H. Butler Clarke, Fellow of St. John's College, Oxford. For the connection between Agriculture and Paganism see *Lib. Pro. Temp.*, ii. 167: καὶ τοῖς γεωργοῦσιν ἐν αὐτοῖς (ιεροῖς) αἱ ἐλπίδες ὄσαι περὶ . . . βοῶν καὶ τῆς σπειρομένης γῆς καὶ πεφυτευμένης.

combined with the pagan instincts of the lower classes, produced in many instances a curious amalgam of the two religions.¹ Heathen festivals under changed names were inserted in the calendar of the church,² just as ecclesiastical manipulation transfigured the old German deities into Christian saints.³ Leo the Great complains that there were Christians in Italy who worshipped the sun—'partim vitio ignorantiae partim paganitatis spiritu': those of Narbonne adored idols, shared in sacrifices, and fed upon immolated victims.⁴ In the time of Narses, Etruscan augury and even the Sibylline books were still consulted for advice and information.⁵

Nevertheless by the end of our period the glory Conclusion.
had indeed departed from paganism. Amid the vicissitudes of a revolution which exchanged the frontiers of Trajan for the walls of Byzantium, the obsolete religion had gradually sunk into oblivion. The world was at length vanquished by the Cross, and the half-prophetic verses of Prudentius received their fulfilment—

'Gaudete, quicquid gentium est,
Judaea, Roma, et Graecia,
Aegypte, Thrax, Persa, Scythia,
Rex unus omnes possidet.'⁶

¹ Cp. Gieseler, i. 310.

² Beugnot, ii. 265.

³ See Buckle, *History of Civilisation*, vol. i. p. 301.

⁴ Beugnot, ii. 214.

⁵ Procop. *De Bell. Goth.* i. 7.

⁶ *Cathemerinon*, xii. 201-204

The hopes of a pagan revival inspired by the elevation of Anthemius and Attalus had not been fulfilled, and those who yet professed adherence to the obsolete religion assumed an attitude of sullen obstinacy—‘uncontrolled,’ says an edict of the period, ‘by the terrors of the law or the threatened penalties of exile.’¹ The displeasure of the gods, which in former days had blighted crops² and rendered miserable the deathbeds of Christian persecutors,³ was now pointed to in explanation of all the evils which had befallen the empire. Barbarian invasions were the judgment of heaven upon an apostate people ;⁴ a nation which neglected the games must not expect to defeat its enemies ;⁵ in the absence of auguries, what provision could exist against future disasters ?⁶ On the other hand, Christian writers discovered with equal facility that the calamities of the age were due to a divine vengeance upon the world for so tardy a suppression of the hated idolatry.

¹ *Theod. Novell. Tit.* iii.

² Symm. *Rel. ad Imp.* ap. Ambrose, v. 97 : ‘sacrilegio annus exaruit.’

³ Cp. Eunap. *Vit. Max.* p. 63 (Valens) ; p. 64 (Festus).

⁴ Cp. a curious passage in *Phot. Bibl.* p. 188, 189. Several statues τετελεσμένοις εἰς βαρβάρων ἀποκώλυσιν were destroyed, and the immediate result was invasion by Goths, Huns, and Sarmatians !

⁵ Cp. Zosim. ii. 7 : τούτου δὲ μὴ φυλαχθέντος ἔδει εἰς τὴν νῦν συνέχουσαν ἡμᾶς ἐλθεῖν τὰ πράγματα δυσκληρίαν.

⁶ *Oros.* vi. 15, 17.

Neither belief was correct. The decay of human institutions is determined by no arbitrary decrees of heaven, but rather by that beneficent law in the working of God's providence which forbids their continued existence when they have ceased to subserve the cause of civilisation and progress. The Roman dominion and ancient paganism having alike outlived their usefulness were 'ready to vanish away,' and side by side with the worn-out empire, fell that religion which had witnessed its rise and so long survived its prosperity.

50570. HEccl.
B.

Author Bennett, Ernest N.

Title Christianity and Paganism.

UNIVERSITY OF TORONTO
LIBRARY

Do not
remove
the card
from this
Pocket.

Acme Library Card Pocket
Under Pat. "Ref. Index File."
Made by LIBRARY BUREAU

